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“NEW YORK, AT FIRST, DID NOT SEE...”:  
MODERN ART, THE PUBLIC, AND THE STIEGLITZ CIRCLE,  
1913-1916

BY  
ERNST BIRSS



A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND  
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "NEW YORK, AT FIRST, DID NOT SEE...": MODERN ART, THE PUBLIC , AND THE STIEGLITZ CIRCLE, 1913-1916. Submitted by ERNST JAMES BIRSS in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN.



### Abstract

In 1913 the furore surrounding the Armory Show brought about important structural changes in the New York art world. Associates of Alfred Stieglitz's "291" gallery, which had been the exclusive centre of modernist activity in the city, responded by publishing material in their magazine, Camera Work, that repositioned the group aesthetically and intellectually. The first chapter explains the often diverse contents of the quarterly with reference to concurrent changes in the public and market for modern art. The transatlantic affiliations of the "291" circle and the part these played in justifying and sustaining the group's activities is also examined.

Early in 1915 members of the "inner circle" at "291" attempted to meet continuing conditions of uncertainty with 291 magazine, an avant-garde journal based on Apollinairian models. The second chapter looks at how the promotion of "291" as a centre for the "avant-garde" involved the group more deeply in the business of art. Francis Picabia's machine portraits, published in Nos. 5/6, are found to have validated commercial aspects of American culture for the group and to have allowed for the establishment of the for-profit Modern Gallery late in 1915. Sexual and gendered contents of 291 are also examined and are discussed in relation to issues of the public and business.



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## **Introduction**



This study proposes to examine the activities of the artists and writers of the Alfred Stieglitz circle in the three years following the Armory Show, the large exhibition of modern art held in New York City in February and March of 1913. It will focus most specifically on 291, a magazine devoted to the most recent artistic tendencies published by the group in 1915 and 1916. In this period, Stieglitz's "291" gallery, which had been one of the only centres of modern activity in the city, faced increasing competition from other venues that sought to capitalise on the notoriety that modern art had achieved as a result of the Show. In my thesis I want to look at how the Stieglitz group attempted to reposition the gallery in these changed circumstances, by means of exhibitions and other activities, but most especially through their publications, Camera Work and 291. I shall argue that material published in these magazines was selected with the purpose of attracting attention to the gallery in the art world and among the general public, with the hope that such attention might regain for Stieglitz and his associates the leadership of the modern movement in New York. Whenever possible, I want to show how editorial decisions met the exigencies of a specific historical situation, and to read the work published not so much for what it says about the art under discussion, but for what is revealed about the Stieglitz circle and the "291" gallery. I will pay especially close attention to those items that deal with the art public and with the business of art, two subjects that were of great concern for Stieglitz and his associates in these years.

This period in the history of the Stieglitz circle has not been adequately examined in the literature.<sup>1</sup> Books and articles on the "291" gallery, many of which focus exclusively on Stieglitz himself, frequently provide little more than a bare outline of events, or fail to situate the group's activities within the context of broader social and intellectual tendencies.<sup>2</sup> Many of the existing accounts, moreover, betray the considerable influence of interpretations that Stieglitz and his followers themselves



placed on past events long after they had occurred.<sup>3</sup> The period 1913 through 1916, which I want to examine in detail here, has generally been described as one of indecision in the activities of the circle, or as a time when the gallery abandoned its educational objectives to become more of an elitist centre devoted to artistic experimentation.<sup>4</sup> While these points of view have some merit, they are, nevertheless, incomplete. Although Stieglitz and his associates did manifest considerable hesitation and uncertainty in this period, they did not, as I hope to show, give up their ambition to play a leading role in the New York art world. On the contrary, examination of Camera Work and 291 reveals that members of the circle showed considerable interest in what was going on around them, and made decisions based on their very pragmatic interests. These publications have, unfortunately, also been rather cursorily dealt with in the literature, a deficiency for which there is, perhaps, good reason. Both magazines published a notoriously eclectic variety of material, and it is often difficult to determine exactly what aesthetic and intellectual positions were being advocated. This tendency has led some historians of the period to dismiss Camera Work, and to a lesser extent 291, as little more than measures of the aesthetic confusion that reigned in the Stieglitz circle.<sup>5</sup> I hope that my approach, which involves the examination of the works published within the context of specific intellectual, and even commercial, situations, will help to make better sense of these magazines, and of the often abrupt changes in editorial direction. Commentary on 291, which is surprisingly limited considering the fame of the publication, suffers from the added shortcoming that this magazine has often been considered as part of, or as related to, the Dada movement.<sup>6</sup> Studies that make this assumption have tended to focus on the “object-portraits” by Francis Picabia that appeared in 291 Nos. 5/6 (July/August 1915), and other works like them. While these items do bear some similarity to the later productions of Dada, work published in 291 was, as I hope to show, undertaken in a quite different spirit and with other objectives in mind.<sup>7</sup> By approaching this material with the aim of determining the



purpose that it served within the practical circumstances of 1915-16, I hope to account for its presence in the magazine without forcing it into conformity with tenets of movements with which it had little in common. In this thesis I also want to look at the striking sexualised and gendered contents of 291 magazine, the presence of which has often been noted but never adequately accounted for. Here, I intend to go into somewhat greater detail, to discuss sources and structure, as well as the ways in which this sexual discourse was related to other themes presented. In the course of my study, I will make use not only of the work published in the magazines themselves, but also of the large numbers of letters and other documents from the period that are preserved in American libraries. Examination of this material, which includes the dummies of an unpublished issue of 291 in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., helps to shed considerable light on the editor's intentions.<sup>8</sup> I also want to look at those aspects of the correspondence that concern the personal motives and interests of individuals involved with the gallery.

The “291” gallery itself was established in 1905 by Alfred Stieglitz and Eduard Steichen to serve as the exhibition venue for their camera society, the Photo-Secession. At that time, Stieglitz was already quite famous as a photographer and propagandist for photography as an art form. Beginning in 1907, however, he increasingly turned over the gallery (soon to be known by its address as “291”) to exhibitions of modern art, ostensibly with the purpose of providing his colleagues with examples of work from another medium. Soon, however, these exhibitions became an end in themselves, and between 1908 and 1912 the gallery showed, often for the first time in the United States, work by such major European artists as Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso. Stieglitz's magazine, Camera Work, was also increasingly devoted to discussions of art and aesthetics. Exhibitions at “291” were seen by a large proportion of the persons involved with art in New York City, and gained Stieglitz and his gallery a considerable fame and notoriety. A magnetic personality, Stieglitz soon attracted to himself a number of



disciples, including the American modern artists Arthur Dove, John Marin, and Marsden Hartley, whose work was also put on display. In the period 1913 through 1915, Stieglitz's work in the gallery was shared by a number of other individuals, the most important of whom was Marius de Zayas, a Mexican caricaturist and writer who became the resident theorist of modern art at "291," and who was instrumental in organising some of its most impressive exhibitions. Other important gallery participants during these years were Paul Haviland, a Harvard graduate and art enthusiast, who was often Stieglitz's mouthpiece in the "notes" published in Camera Work, and Agnes Meyer, a beautiful young journalist and collector of art who, like others, was attracted by the air of freedom and experiment she found at the gallery. By 1915 these three individuals had come to form something of a sub-group at "291" and in that year attempted to take the gallery in the more radical direction that they thought changing circumstances required. 291 magazine, largely put together under their direction, was the instrument by which they hoped to accomplish this task. In the course of their efforts, however, they managed to offend their mentor, Alfred Stieglitz, and by early 1916 had left the "291" group.

This thesis comprises two large chapters, each of which is divided into several smaller sections. The first chapter deals with the period March 1913 through December 1914, the time when the structural changes caused by the Armory Show in the New York art world started to become painfully obvious to "291" insiders. This chapter will pay special attention to Camera Work and the use that was made of it by the group in their efforts to meet the challenges created by the changed situation. I will also look at exhibitions and other activities of the circle, including a trip made by Marius de Zayas to France in the summer of 1914, during which he established a personal and professional relationship with Guillaume Apollinaire that was to have considerable importance for the future. The second chapter will deal exclusively with 291 magazine, published by the group between March 1915 and March of the following year, and will



similarly endeavour to show how this publication was used to meet the practical exigencies of the period. Here, however, I will concentrate on those themes relating to the public and business that so concerned “291” insiders, as well as on the aforementioned sexual and generative imagery. Special attention will also be paid to the famous Picabia machine drawings in Nos. 5/6, and to the accompanying essay by de Zayas.<sup>9</sup>

I hope that, taken as a whole, my thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the role played by the Stieglitz circle in American modernism during the early part of this century, and that it will also provide further insight into artistic relations between the United States and Europe, a topic that has been the object of some attention in recent years.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, I hope to show how modernist groups were able to mobilise avant-garde art and ideas within a very specific context, often for quite practical, promotional ends that were unrelated to art as such. My thesis should also make some contribution to the understanding of modern art’s problematic relationship with mass and popular culture, and with its sources of patronage.<sup>11</sup>



## Notes

1. Early twentieth-century American art has not been adequately studied in the first place. While quite thorough accounts of art and artists are available, such topics as the audience for art, the places where it was exhibited, or the cultural meaning of modern art and avant-garde activity in American society have hardly been touched upon.
2. For a brief survey of this literature see Chapter One, note 1.
3. Here I am thinking, in particular, of Dorothy Norman, Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer (New York: Random House, 1973). Norman, who was Stieglitz's friend and disciple in the 1930s, recorded many of his reminiscences and later published them in her magazine Twice-a-Year, as well as in the book. Because Stieglitz's versions of events are often the most accessible, they have entered many of the standard accounts. Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), suffers from a similarly uncritical attitude.
4. William Innes Homer writes: "After 1913, 291 changed from a pioneering institution to a more exclusive center for aesthetic investigation. Stieglitz continued to think of "291" as a 'laboratory,' but it gradually became a kind of private club devoted to an artistic elite." Homer, Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde. (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), 173. See also Lowe, Stieglitz, 177-83.
5. In Timothy Rogers' opinion, the "brief articles and maxims on aesthetics published in Camera Work, which depend greatly upon 'intuition,' 'spirituality,' 'truth,' and 'individuality,' to convince, provide little evidence of consistent aesthetic principles underlying Stieglitz's activities." Rodgers, "False Memories: Alfred Stieglitz and the Development of the Nationalist Aesthetic," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 62.
6. For a review of literature on 291 see Chapter Two, notes 1-4.
7. This is less of a failing in recent studies, but see: Dickran Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde 1910-1925 (Middleton, Conn. Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 29-48.
8. Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn; Agnes Meyer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; Marius de Zayas Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York. These last are photocopies of originals in the possession of Rodrigo de Zayas, Seville, Spain.
9. I had also intended to examine the large number of poems and works of art by women published in 291 magazine, and to discuss the part played by women artists and writers in the Stieglitz circle during these years. Unfortunately, limitations of space have forced me to curtail my ambitions. Some of this material has been incorporated into Chapter Two.
10. Most of this literature has to do with the Dada movement and the changes it



underwent in the United States. See Francis Naumann, "The New York Dada Movement: Better Late than Never," Arts Magazine 54, no. 6 (February 1980), 143-49; Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed. New York Dada (New York: Willis Locker and Owens, 1986); Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives; Willard Bohn, "Guillaume Apollinaire and the New York Avant-Garde," Comparative Literature Studies 8, no. 1 (March 1976), 40-51. A much superior study of another period is Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

11. For an example see Kenneth Silver's excellent study of the French avant-garde's post-World War I rapprochement with the forces of order in: Silver, Esprit de Corps (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).



## **Chapter One**



## After the Armory Show

Between February 15 and March 15, 1913 a large exhibition of modern art took place at the 69th Infantry Regiment Armory in New York City that led to some significant changes in the structure of the New York art world. Officially entitled the International Exhibition of Modern Art, but more often referred to as the Armory Show, it included over a thousand works, many of them by such leading members of European avant-garde movements as Picasso, Matisse, Picabia, and Duchamp. The size of the exhibition and the extreme novelty of much of the art on display caused an unprecedented sensation. Tens of thousands of people, many of whom had shown little previous interest in modern art, paid to see the Armory Show during its month long stay in New York, and many more attended the smaller exhibition that opened in Chicago and Boston, or read about the scandalous event in the newspapers. The Show also had the effect of kindling an interest in recent art among certain American collectors, and within a year a number of galleries specialising in modern work had opened to meet the new demand.<sup>1</sup> Before the coming of the Armory Show, this art had received a rather limited exposure in the United States, and was largely unknown outside a small group of artists and intellectuals. One of the few places in New York where the most recent art from both Europe and America could be viewed on a regular basis was the small gallery on Fifth Avenue operated by Alfred Stieglitz and his associates known as "291." In 1908, Stieglitz, who was best known as a photographer, and his colleague of the time, Eduard Steichen, had become aware of the revolutionary changes that were taking place in European art, and had given over their gallery on Fifth Avenue, formerly devoted to photography, to exhibitions of modern painting and sculpture. In the five years before the Armory Show, Stieglitz had exhibited, often for the first time in America, art by Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, and other Europeans, as well as that of such American painters as John Marin, Arthur Dove, and Marsden Hartley. Stieglitz's journal, Camera Work, had increasingly been



devoted to criticism that attempted to put this new art into perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Stieglitz's activities, however, had had a rather limited impact on public awareness, partly because he lacked the necessary resources, and partly because his unique philosophy of art would not allow him to adopt frankly promotional methods. The "291" gallery itself consisted of two small rooms on the top story of a building, otherwise occupied by shops and businesses, that served both for exhibitions and as a meeting place for artists, critics, and others interested in the modern movement. The art that Stieglitz exhibited was shown because it had been recommended to him by people in closer touch with Europe, or because it contained something that he himself felt might be important. Stieglitz's aesthetic criteria were rather vague, and selections seem often to have been made based on his intuitive sense that certain works possessed what he called "life," or contained something that had not been seen before. Not surprisingly, "291" insiders frequently described the gallery as a "laboratory" or as a place where "experiments" were performed.<sup>3</sup> The "experiments" conducted at "291," however, were not always in the first instance artistic, but involved the people who walked through its doors. Although the exact nature of his work in this regard was also never very well defined, Stieglitz seems to have believed himself to be testing the validity of the art on view by means of public presentation, while, at the same time, gauging public vitality by the measure of its response to the art shown. He claimed that he could in this way come to some conclusions about both the importance of the modern art movement and the spiritual condition of the American people. By means of a close interaction with the public Stieglitz also hoped to have some effect on the American consciousness. A visit to "291" typically involved not only contact with "living" works of art, but also an elaborate discussion of their importance for the viewer with Stieglitz himself.<sup>4</sup>

If Stieglitz's aesthetic criteria were often rather vague, he left little uncertainty of



his opinion that there existed a deep animosity between true art and the materialism and greed that infected American civilisation as a whole. Modern art, he seems to have believed, was a manifestation of an evolving spirituality, allied with similar tendencies in other fields, that would eventually lead to an improvement in the human condition.<sup>5</sup> One of the primary aims of “291,” therefore, was to provide a place where Americans could have an opportunity to escape the effects of the “immoral American Goldhunt,” and breathe a purer air.<sup>6</sup> Stieglitz’s colleague, Paul Haviland, writing on the occasion of the opening of the new premises of the Photo-Secession Galleries in 1908, described the effect that “291” presumably had on visitors:

For half an hour, or an hour, or two hours you forgot all about New York, the rush of the subway and the struggle after the almighty dollar; and when you got back into the turmoil of everyday life, you felt that you had discovered an oasis, seemingly thousands of miles from the scorching struggle for life, where at your pleasure you could stop and refresh yourself in the quiet enjoyment of life; a quiet nook in a city of conflict, where you breathed an atmosphere of mutual helpfulness and understanding.<sup>7</sup>

Frequently in the pages of Camera Work one even encounters the curious notion that “the spirit of 291” is itself an entity of great value. Haviland, for example, in his notes on the Picasso exhibition of 1910, wrote that

It is well to remember that the exhibitions held at ‘291’ are looked upon by those who arrange them as nothing more than a series of demonstrations, each demonstration being of unusual value in itself, but of greater value in its relationship to the underlying idea which has brought forth ‘291.’<sup>8</sup>

The implication here, as elsewhere, is that the spirit in which “investigations” were conducted at “291” was actually of greater importance than the virtues or shortcomings of any individual exhibition.

Although the art that Stieglitz displayed and the ideas he espoused were taken seriously by only a relatively small group of admirers, his isolated position in the New York art world had some advantages as well. Because there was no real market for the work he showed he had little competition from other galleries in his narrowly



circumscribed field, and could be sure of gaining the little business that was available. The relative absence of intellectual competitors, moreover, allowed him to do and say more or less what he pleased without fear of being contradicted. Any adverse criticism that he received from conservative quarters could even be interpreted as lending credence to his belief that modern art expressed and promoted a spiritual advance. But Stieglitz's commercial and intellectual monopoly placed him in a rather precarious position as well. The elevation of his method of enquiry and "the spirit of '291'" to the highest places in his artistic philosophy created something of a void at the centre of his thinking that could leave him without clear intellectual or aesthetic direction. Moreover, his unwillingness to involve himself in the business side of art left the field open for those with fewer scruples.<sup>9</sup>

Although Alfred Stieglitz and his associates at "291" did not participate in any significant way in the organisation of the Armory Show, the huge scale of the event and the furore it created were something that they could not ignore. The most significant aspect of the Show for Stieglitz, as for others involved in the New York art world, was the enormous amount of attention it attracted, not only from those interested in art, but also among the general public. At the outset, however, the exact implications of the success of the Armory Show were not very clear, and much speculation resulted. Interested observers were both delighted and perplexed by the very diversity of the reactions that the Show seemed to elicit, and by the variety of people who, even if they did not understand what they saw, found in the new art something worth noticing. Many came to scoff, but, according to contemporary accounts, others approached the art on view with a more open mind. Hutchins Hapgood, for example, a writer with Greenwich Village connections, wrote that

to move about in those armory crowds and see the eager vital faces, the range of types, the curiosity, and the intelligence; the way in which people merged into the pictures, as it were, communicated with them, argued with them, compared life notes with them - this, indeed made one hopeful, made one expectant of all good things to come, made one trust democracy, and realise that people will take even the best, if there is life in it.<sup>10</sup>



Hapgood's comments were, in part, the product of wishful thinking, but the statement is important as an indication of the high hopes aroused by the International Exhibition. Oscar Bluemner, an artist closely associated with Stieglitz, made some similar observations in an article for Camera Work that seems to represent "291" thinking on the Show:

Of the two component parts of the American public that have seen and judged, namely the critics and laymen, so called, the latter have proven, on the whole, to be the more intelligent observers and contributors to the total opinion. This is the most curious and the most hopeful sign of art in America.<sup>11</sup>

Only later did it become clear that the enthusiastic public response to the Show had largely been provoked by its novelty, and that those most deeply affected by the art exhibited were a much smaller group of artists, intellectuals, and collectors. Initially, however, in the opinion of several well-informed critics, the Armory Show seemed to have created a vast, if rather incomprehensible, new audience for modern art.<sup>12</sup>

While, to begin with, the overwhelming success of the Armory Show did not cause Stieglitz to change his beliefs or his methods, it did unseat him from his position as the sole advocate of artistic modernism in New York. The Show's organisers, the most important of whom were Walt Kuhn, Walter Pach, and Arthur B. Davies, had learned about the revolutionary developments in European art from Stieglitz and through personal contacts abroad, but had made arrangements for the International Exhibition largely without his help. Stieglitz was appointed to the organising committee but did little more than provide some art for display and prepare an article on the modern movement that eventually appeared in the New York American. Stieglitz, however, does not seem to have taken great offence at his relative exclusion. The commotion that accompanied large exhibitions was, he believed, not in keeping with the values he was trying to promote, and any attention they attracted to modern art would, he was sure, soon fade from public awareness.<sup>13</sup> Despite these beliefs, there is



some evidence that, as the proportions of the forthcoming event became clear, Stieglitz and his associates did experience a sense of threat that led them to justify their own more unobtrusive methods. The January 1913 issue of Camera Work, which appeared just before the Show opened, published an open letter from Haviland to Stieglitz that defended him against charges levelled by Christian Brinton that, despite “291”’s efforts, the new art was still virtually unknown in America. According to Haviland the upcoming International Exhibition was itself evidence of the “monument built up stone by stone by the Photo-Secession.”<sup>14</sup> The International Exhibition, Haviland argued, would lack “291”’s quiet ambience and would only confuse the public with its size and novelty. A similar defensiveness is evident from the manner in which Stieglitz presented his ideas in the article written for the New York American. After explaining the origins of modern art in the quest for self-expression, Stieglitz went on to offer as the prime example of this attitude the work of John Marin, then conveniently on display at “291.”<sup>15</sup>

Stieglitz’s response to the International Exhibition, however, even after its importance for art in America had become clear, was surprisingly positive. His enthusiasm seems to have stemmed both from a belief that the Armory Show’s success had proved his claims that modern art was relevant for modern life, and from a perception that its achievement had, in large part, been the result of his own slow educative efforts. It seems likely, moreover, that Stieglitz also supposed that the Show had carried on his own work by means of some of his own methods. If accounts by Hapgood and Bluemner are to be believed, the vital and personal reactions of the “armory crowds” to the “life-messages” on view bore a remarkable similarity to the desired effects on the public after a particularly successful day at “291.” These similarities must have encouraged Stieglitz to think that the International Exhibition had been engaged in some of the same kinds of “experiments” with the public that he himself was carrying out.<sup>16</sup> The apparent unsalability of much of the art displayed



appears also to have reinforced the assumption, already common at “291,” that modern art stood in opposition to the “commercialism” of the American mainstream. Writing in his Camera Work essay, Oscar Bluemner remarked that the success of the Armory Show had caused considerable discomfort among “those whose ease of mind is disturbed by the prospect of a possible loss of dollars through anything new,” by whom he seems to have meant the New York art dealers.<sup>17</sup> Bluemner concluded that the Show was a further manifestation of the battle between “Idealism and Materialism,” the very conflict in which Stieglitz had been engaged for years.<sup>18</sup>

In the period immediately following the Armory Show, then, the success of the exhibition could be understood by members of the Stieglitz circle almost as yet another chapter in the history of “291” itself, and not as the first arrival of competitors for public allegiance. Many of the exhibitions and other projects that took place at the gallery in the months after the Show seem, in fact, to have been predicated on the assumption that “291” could capitalise quite unreflectively on the Armory Show’s achievement. Projects undertaken in this frame of mind included the preparation of a Special Issue of Camera Work that purported to demonstrate modern art’s connection with modern consciousness, the publication of a booklet by Paul Haviland and Marius de Zayas that explained art in sociological terms, and an ambitious pair of exhibitions of work by de Zayas and Picabia that seemed to begin where the Armory Show had left off. These exhibitions and publications were part of a concerted effort on the part of Stieglitz and his associates to establish “291” as the leader and mentor of what promised to be a much expanded modern art movement in New York. They seem founded on the premise that the success of the Armory Show was evidence of a general rise in spiritual awareness on the part of the American public, and that this new consciousness could be engaged by the further presentation of intellectually stimulating material.<sup>19</sup> Enthusiasm at “291” for advanced art and its possible acceptance by the public were also greatly augmented during the spring of 1913 by the presence in New



York of Francis Picabia, the Parisian abstractionist who had come to the United States for the Armory Show, and who had quickly discovered “291” and the Stieglitz circle. Picabia, whose enigmatic art was among the most controversial in Show [Fig. 1: “*Dances à la source I*”], soon found himself in great demand as a spokesman for the modern movement and gave a series of lively interviews to the metropolitan newspapers. For his part, Picabia took a childlike delight in the mechanisation and frenzied pace of New York life. “Your New York is the Cubist, Futurist city,” he told a reporter from the New York American, “with its architecture, its life, its spirit, it expresses modern thought.”<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Picabia was also confident that, because America was so advanced socially and technologically, his art would find there the audience that it did not have in Europe:

I have come here to make the Americans accept the new artistic movement in the same spirit as they accept political movements - movements which at first may have seemed antagonistic, but which the Americans, with their decided love for freedom of expression, then accepted broadmindedly in almost all fields.<sup>21</sup>

Picabia was equally enthusiastic about “291,” and, to Stieglitz’s great satisfaction, described him in the newspapers as “the man best informed of this whole revolution in the art of painting.”<sup>22</sup>

Stieglitz was thus able to enlist one of the “stars” of the Armory Show, and an able spokesman for modern art, in the service of “291” even while the large exhibition was still in progress. Then, only two weeks after the Show closed, the gallery engineered another coup with an exhibit of a series of abstract watercolour sketches that Picabia had made in New York to convey his impressions of the city [Fig. 2: “*New York*”]. Exhibition of Picabia’s work had the effect of linking “291” directly with some of the most notorious aspects of the Armory Show, and gave the impression that the gallery had managed to extract and summarise some of its most significant features.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, although the works exhibited were some of the most completely non-representational that Picabia had yet produced, and were among the most hermetic ever



shown at “291,” the artist maintained that his art nevertheless had great relevance for the times. In the catalogue statement he prepared “for the benefit of the public that came to see his work,”<sup>24</sup> Picabia proclaimed himself optimistic that his art would soon be understood by all:

Art is one of the means by which men communicate with each other and objectivize the deepest contact of their personality with nature. This expression is necessarily related to the needs of the civilisation of the time. It has its conventions as has any means of expression. Its conventions are the limitations of the personality of the artist, a limitation which man tends to extend, as he tends to remove all limits to his perception....The laws of this new convention [abstraction] have as yet been hardly formulated but they will become gradually more defined just as musical laws have become more defined and they will rapidly become as understandable as were the objective representation of nature.<sup>25</sup>

While Picabia’s statement was itself an outcome of the enthusiasm that the success of the Armory Show had generated, his lucid arguments for the ability of form to communicate ideas must themselves have provided great encouragement to members of the Stieglitz circle as they prepared to identify “291” even more thoroughly with the most recent tendencies in art and ideas. Picabia’s arguments suggested that even this highly abstracted art could bring about the desired rapport with the audience that, as we have seen, was so highly valued at the gallery.<sup>26</sup>

The most important attempt on the part of “291” to capitalise on the sudden notoriety of modern art, however, was a “Special Issue” of Camera Work published over the summer. Although the volume focused on Picabia, the artist who most closely linked “291” with the Armory Show, its scope was broad, and articles published attempted to connect modern art with fields as different as sociology and the physical sciences. The presence in the volume of a large number of the writers from outside the circle, or who were new to Camera Work, seems to have been a deliberate attempt on Stieglitz’s part to swell the ranks of the “291”’s participants. Gertrude Stein, who led off the issue with a “Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia,” was a writer of



stream-of-consciousness poetry living in Paris, albeit one very interested in art and artists.<sup>27</sup> Immediately following Stein's piece came an explanation of her work by Mabel Dodge, head of the famous Greenwich Village salon, where the topics of conversation were more often social and political. Other newcomers who contributed include Picabia's wife, Gabrielle Buffet, who wrote an article on "Modern Art and the Public," the chemist, Maurice Aisen, author of "The Latest Evolution in Art and Picabia," and John Weichsel, a socialist whose essays on art would soon be a conspicuous feature of the magazine. The longest and most substantial piece published, however, was "Auditor et Altera Pars: Some Plain Sense on the Modern Art Movement" by Stieglitz's artist friend, Oscar Bluemner, which, as has already been noted, attempted to establish the historical significance of the Armory Show itself. A series of reproductions, beginning with Cézanne and ending with Picabia, that made up a little history of modern art not unlike the one presented at the Armory, closed off the volume.<sup>28</sup>

Inclusion of writers from such diverse areas of endeavour had the effect of suggesting to readers of the Special Issue that, in the aftermath of the Armory Show, "291" was at the forefront of a wide range of intellectual activities. This impression was further reinforced by the assumption, present in many of these essays, that modern art itself now led the way in modern thought. Mabel Dodge, for example, established a clear order of precedence between art and literature when, near the beginning of her essay, she declared that "Gertrude Stein is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint."<sup>29</sup> In "Modern Art and the Public," Gabrielle Buffet argued that modern art even formed the necessary counterpart to contemporary science. "The development of science," she wrote, "has given us a new conception of life. It has given life new meaning."

We have gone past the first sensorial contact with the universe....We plumb to the depths, we pierce below the surface to grasp their quality, their essence, and in doing so an infinite world of new forms is opened up to us....In order that



art should express the complexity of this new state of mind it has to create new elements.<sup>30</sup>

It is only through an abstract art, “the result of a necessary evolution,” that this complex state of affairs can faithfully be communicated.<sup>31</sup> In “The Latest Evolution in Art and Picabia,” Maurice Aisen argued, in a similar fashion, that the modern art movement was related to a variety of social and intellectual changes. Recent developments “in ethics, in politics, in the community and in the individual” have gone so far as to create in some sensitive people a “sixth sense,” one “purely psychical,” that is related “not...to matter but to spirit.”<sup>32</sup> According to Aisen

It is with this psychical sense that we may be able to explain the art of Picabia and by it his work will no longer present a question for us but a palpable answer.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of the piece, modern art is placed at the front of this psychical tendency and even identified as the harbinger of a utopian future:

I feel that out of this movement, because of the truth that all workers of today reflect the community of tomorrow, as painting grows in this direction, so will our morals, our understanding. Life will become more beautiful than it is today; will bring among us bigger ideals of life, pure ideals, deprived of materiality, making better the people....<sup>34</sup>

“Evolution” and “consciousness,” used to describe prevailing tendencies in both art and society, are the words that appear most frequently in the Special Issue. The impression that the volume as a whole seems intended to create in the mind of the reader is of an ever more complex world whose rapidly changing nature can truly be known only by the super-sensitive mind of the modern artist. The volume suggests that readers of Camera Work, and visitors to “291” can participate in this project, even if their primary interest is not art at all.

Predictably, the public to whom these essays were addressed, and which had become so important since the Armory Show, was also a matter of some concern in the Special Issue. Two attitudes toward the public can be identified, seemingly at odds, but



in fact mutually reinforcing. The first is characterised by a dismissal of any suggestion that artists should take popular tastes into account, or that wide public comprehension of art is even necessary. In “Modern Art and the Public,” Gabrielle Buffet writes that, when viewing a work of art

the question...of whether one has or has not a merely sensuous pleasure ought not to impose itself at all. On the contrary one should try to suppress one’s own personality in order to understand that of the artist.<sup>35</sup>

Art is not a “pastime,” she says, but

a means by which men may communicate with each other and express the profound needs of their being, of their race, and of their epoch....<sup>36</sup>

A second, more favourable opinion of the public, accompanied by a more generous attitude toward it, can be found in Maurice Aisen’s “The Latest Evolution in Art and Picabia.” That “the majority, the great majority of the lovers of art, are puzzled before the last work of Picabia,” is for him a problem that commands some attention.<sup>37</sup> While he maintains that modern art is primarily for those with a developed “sixth sense,” the essay seems haunted by an awareness that if art is to contribute to psychic “evolution,” it must be able to communicate its intentions to a large proportion of its audience. Aisen is confident that a considerable part of the public does have the required abilities, and that Stieglitz and “291” will complete the work of the Armory Show:

In some of Picabia’s studies for his future paintings, made here in New York, which have been exhibited at ‘291,’ especially the ones that express the emotions he received from the songs of coloured people, - he has communicated his sensations to many people, who had little or no emotional comprehension of his paintings exhibited at the International Exhibit held at the Armory.<sup>38</sup>

Oscar Bluemner, writing in “Auditor et Altera Pars: Some Plain Sense on the Modern Art Movement,” is, if possible, even more sanguine. As we have seen, the fact that the paintings on view at the Armory had an impact on thousands of quite ordinary people seemed, for Bluemner, to speak of an untapped aesthetic capability in persons usually dismissed as the philistine masses. The challenge, as he saw it, was to create channels of communication with this “vital” public that bypassed such conservative critics as



Kenyon Cox and Royal Cortissoz.<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, Bluemner agreed with Aisen that “291” was succeeding in this task with the Picabia exhibition:

[Picabia’s] studies at 291 Fifth Avenue were in some ways, the very abstract and quintessence of what was new in the bigger show. Yet the new did not fail to be recognised, felt, discussed and, as a lesson and stimulation, appropriated, by a surprisingly large part of the public.<sup>40</sup>

Although much of this faith in the public was wishful thinking on the part of writers with a considerable stake in “291” and the modern art movement, reiteration of these ideas in the Special Issue suggests that some members of the Stieglitz circle did believe them to be true. Attempts to introduce the subject of the public into the debate seem to have had a solid promotional purpose as well. Whatever the motives of individual writers may have been, the efforts made in the volume to take public objections to modern art seriously and to commend those willing to approach difficult art with an open mind, had the effect of putting a more inviting face on a rather forbidding subject. In the end, the contemptuous and the more considerate attitudes toward the public complemented one another. The former attitude indicated to readers that the task of understanding modern art was indeed difficult, but that through it one could possibly gain entry into an intellectual elite. The latter suggested that there was help to be had in the struggle to understand and that a substantial number of people had already been initiated. The double-edged thrust of the Special Issue was, in fact, summed up in an advertisement for Camera Work that appeared here for the first time and which was reprinted in all subsequent issues. The item, mainly intended to sell back numbers, began with a series of questions addressed to the reader:

Are you interested in the deeper meaning of Photography?  
Are you interested in the evolution of Photography as a  
medium of expression?  
Are you interested in the meaning of “Modern Art”?  
Are you interested in the Development and Exposition of a living Idea?  
Are you interested in Freedom of Thought and Freedom in  
Expression?<sup>41</sup>

After a long list of the illustrious artists and writers whose work had appeared in the



magazine, the ad declared: “Camera Work is published for those who know or want to know.”<sup>42</sup> Once again, the advertisement informed readers that “291” was the guardian of a desirable, though not very widely disseminated, body of knowledge that could best be acquired by means of the helping hand of the magazine.<sup>43</sup> The advertisement also spoke of a hope, on Stieglitz’s part, that “291” would be able to make contact with a new readership even while maintaining links with the older photographic subscribers, many of whom were not very pleased with the direction that the magazine was taking.<sup>44</sup>

Yet another response on the part of “291” to the expectations created by the Armory Show was a little book written by Marius de Zayas and Paul Haviland entitled A Study of the Modern Evolution of Plastic Expression, published by the gallery in late February, 1913. Haviland’s part in the collaboration seems to have been limited to a few anecdotes concerning Stieglitz’s activities at the gallery, and the ideas expressed in it are therefore mainly those of de Zayas. Although intended as yet another explanation of modern art for the benefit of the public, the book is nearly incomprehensible in places and was evidently written in haste. The publication date, February 26, suggests, in fact, that it was prepared while the Armory Show was still in progress, probably with the intention of involving de Zayas, the resident theoretician at “291,” in the unexpected public controversy concerning modern art. One of the most important members of the Stieglitz circle between 1913 and 1916, de Zayas was a Mexican-born caricaturist who had moved to the United States in 1908 to avoid persecution in his native country. He was already quite well known in New York for his witty caricatures of society figures when he was invited by Stieglitz to exhibit at “291” in the following year. Through Stieglitz he became acquainted with the modern art movement, his knowledge of which was greatly increased by meetings with Picasso and other artists during lengthy stays in France.



De Zayas, perhaps because he was himself a relative newcomer to modern art, was very anxious to explain and justify its importance in historical and theoretical terms. In many respects, his concern for art's relevance was typical of the Stieglitz circle, and was the result of an apprehension, already noted in the Special Issue, that modern art might not, in fact, have much to say to the majority of people. Not long before the Armory Show, in an effort to make the foundations of modern art more secure, de Zayas combined his knowledge of recent European art with his wide reading in contemporary anthropology and sociology to produce a coherent, if rather eccentric, philosophy of art that was articulated in a series of difficult articles for Camera Work.<sup>45</sup> The first of these theoretical articles, entitled "The Sun Has Set," published in the July 1912 issue, approached modern art as a social problem in need of conscientious examination. Why was it, de Zayas asked himself, that the most advanced civilisation in human history was producing art whose most conspicuous features were a wide-ranging eclecticism and a yearning for more primitive forms of expression?<sup>46</sup> At this stage of his thinking, de Zayas argued that such self-conscious "rummaging about in ancient cemeteries" should be considered a sign of artistic and spiritual exhaustion.<sup>47</sup> He concluded, however, that, when modern art was looked at in this way, it did take on some relevance, for it was shown to be an accurate reflection of disturbed modern times.<sup>48</sup>

De Zayas seems soon to have realised that the rather conservative arguments set out in "The Sun Has Set" had led him into an intellectual and professional cul-de-sac. In two further essays, entitled "Photography" and "The Evolution of Form - Introduction," both published in the January 1913 issue of Camera Work, de Zayas proposed a more innovative solution to the problem of modern art's apparent lack of relevance. In these essays he argued that contemporary art did indeed have a deep connection with the present in so far as it followed the methods of science, the



paradigm of all worthwhile modern endeavour.<sup>49</sup> Modern art, he now maintained, was only apparently primitive and eclectic. At its best, it used the systematic methods of science to explore the totality of known “Form,” whose full range had only recently been brought to light by the investigations of ethnology, and the abstract nature of which had been revealed by the example of primitive art:<sup>50</sup>

The fact is that Form, in all its manifestations throughout the evolution of man, has never in the History of Art been fully understood until the present time. When the artist left the poetical conception of art and turned to Ethnology in search of a new conception of Form, Art emerged from the mysterious atmosphere into which idealism had plunged it. The beautiful surface of beauty [sic] which inspired contemplation vanished and there remained, the powerful force which has compelled man to the plastic expression of thought. The Artist no longer wants to be mystified by mystery, but wants to be enlightened by knowledge....<sup>51</sup>

In de Zayas’ opinion, modern art, like modern science, was essentially an exploration of something outside the artist himself, and he is unwavering in his condemnation of all kinds of artistic subjectivism. The principal object of his scorn in this regard is “cosmic and metaphysical Art” that sought to communicate spiritual states by means of form.<sup>52</sup> This kind of art, apparently that produced under the influence of Symbolism, is necessarily devoid of meaning because it attempts “to represent the irrepresentable and to limit the incommensurable.”<sup>53</sup> De Zayas wants modern art to confine itself to what it does best, the systematic exploration of form by quasi-scientific means. Interestingly, as he makes his case for a scientific art, de Zayas seems even to go so far as to renounce “art” altogether in favour of something more akin to chemistry or physics:

It was not until Art felt the powerful influence of Science that it awoke and broadened its horizon, calling to its aid the resources which science had accumulated. Possibly, this only means the absorption of Art by Science.<sup>54</sup>

To draw a conclusion from statements such as these that de Zayas would prefer to exchange art for something more relevant would, I believe, be mistaken. De Zayas’ purpose, not very different from that of the writers published in the Special Issue, is to



make the foundations of modern art all the more stable by broadening its compass, albeit at the expense of some elements, such as the communication of internal states, sometimes thought to be intrinsic to it.<sup>55</sup>

De Zayas and Haviland's short book on the "Modern Evolution of Plastic Expression," published at the time of the Armory Show, restated many of these ideas with little basic alteration, but with an odd inflection that probably had much to do with the circumstances of the book's production. Like other members of the Stieglitz circle who were struck by the overwhelming response to the International Exhibition, de Zayas seems to have been motivated by the event to pay somewhat closer attention to the art public. The book's overriding deference to science, even more in evidence here than in the essays, suggests that it was, in fact, written with the curious, if rather skeptical Armory crowds in mind. De Zayas seems to have hoped that, if he could demonstrate a clear connection between art and science, he might be able to validate modern art at a time when it had much to gain but was still potentially vulnerable. In the booklet, de Zayas argued once again that what made modern art worthy of consideration was its relation to the reigning paradigm of knowledge:

The artist in all times has been closely allied to the religious spirit of his time. When man worshipped the forces of nature the artist devoted himself to the representation of the forces of nature; when man worshipped beauty, the artist gave material representation to his conception of beauty. The religion of today is science, and the modern movement in art reflects this characteristic intellectual and analytical attitude of mind.<sup>56</sup>

While the book exhibited much of the same double attitude toward the public found in the Camera Work Special Issue, in it de Zayas demonstrated a remarkable willingness to take public objections seriously. His adopted persona through much of the book is, in fact, that of an impartial and reasoned observer of recent developments whose only interest is to get at the truth of the matter. Interestingly, at some points in his argument, de Zayas even begins to distance himself from theories that he had



espoused in the past. Thus, with regard to modern art's claims to scientific purpose, he asks:

Is it worth while trying to get at truth through abstract and apparently incomprehensible representations of the investigations of the artist, or does this research belong to the strictly scientific men?...Have the modern artists expressed a truth or the truth or have they only tried to express the process of their investigation?<sup>57</sup>

De Zayas' own answer to this question would seem to be that yes, modern artists can get at the truth provided they follow de Zayas' "scientific" prescriptions. But because the answer is not clear from the outset, the question, and others like it, begin to put de Zayas' own ideas under examination from an apparently neutral point-of-view. Unfortunately, the number of critical positions begin to multiply to the point of confusion as he provides the reader with explanations of modern art that range from those provided by artists themselves to de Zayas' own more qualified opinions.<sup>58</sup> The variety of information included seems to speak of a deep anxiety on de Zayas' part with regard to the security of the modern movement's place in the art world and in the wider community. That art must have close connections with something outside itself is a dominant theme in the book. We are repeatedly told that "the artist being part of the community reflects the soul of the community in which he lives," and are warned that<sup>59</sup>

in exclusive individuality the individual works with his own individual resources for his own individual self. The moment he excludes himself from the community, the community is excluded from his feelings.<sup>60</sup>

De Zayas' other contribution to the activities at "291" in the spring of 1913 was an exhibition of his series of "abstract caricatures" on which he had been working since late 1912. De Zayas' ambitions in these caricatures seem to be somewhat at odds with the skepticism he had shown towards the communication of subjective states by form in the essays, and their exhibition suggests that de Zayas was not, in fact, completely satisfied with the limits he had placed on modern expression. The abstract caricatures themselves are elegant linear compositions that sought to chart an individual's character



and personal destiny by means of abstract shapes and mathematical symbols.<sup>61</sup> Persons treated in this way included Alfred Stieglitz and Francis Picabia, the “291” insiders Agnes Meyer and Paul Haviland, and Theodore Roosevelt [Figs. 3-8]. According to de Zayas’ catalogue essay, the caricatures, when properly read, provide a more complete analysis of an individual life than is possible by means of more traditional methods of portraiture. Artists, he maintained, had been hindered in their attempts to portray the human spirit by the fact that they could not “represent materially something essentially immaterial.”<sup>62</sup> As he had argued in his essays, de Zayas finds that an insurmountable barrier exists between the subjective state that is to be communicated and the plastic means of expression available. In an eccentric twist to his argument, however, de Zayas now argued that the use of mathematical symbols provided the solution to this problem. Because “mathematics are essentially symbolical,” they are able to represent such things as “psychological and metaphysical entities.”<sup>63</sup> Abstract form, he now seems willing to admit, can also be used to delineate some aspects of a life:

The technique of my procedure consists in representing: (1) the spirit of man by algebraic formulas; (2) his material self by geometric equivalents; (3) and his initial force by trajectories within the rectangle that encloses the plastic expression and represents life.<sup>64</sup>

De Zayas thus seems to have believed that, by the addition of mathematical equations to his work, he had solved the problem of the communication of spiritual qualities by means of art. He also maintained that, because the abstract caricatures dealt with something from outside the artist, they were, like all good modern art, essentially investigative in character. “They are not art,” he wrote,

but simply a graphical and plastic analysis of individuals ....These caricatures are not the expression of my psychical self, but the intrinsic expression, as I perceive it, of the individuals themselves.<sup>65</sup>

The ideas set out by de Zayas in his catalogue essay are so bizarre that it has even been suggested that de Zayas meant the abstract caricatures as a joke, or as a satire of “plastic expression.”<sup>66</sup> There is, however, no evidence to suggest that de Zayas



intended his work to be taken in other than a spirit of the utmost seriousness. During the summer of 1914 he showed the caricatures to prominent artists and writers in Paris and then, late in 1914, they were reproduced in Camera Work together with another serious explanatory essay.<sup>67</sup> I would suggest that the abstract caricatures are what they claimed to be, another proposed solution to the problems that de Zayas believed to be inherent in modern art, and that had precluded his full participation to this point. Exhibition of the abstract caricatures was probably encouraged by the excitement generated by the Armory Show, and by the vocal presence in New York of Francis Picabia, another artist who was attempting to transmit ideas by means of highly abstract work. The arguments set out in de Zayas' catalogue essay were, in fact, similar, in many respects, to those made by Picabia in the essay he wrote for his own exhibition at "291." Like de Zayas, Picabia professed to analyse objectivity by means of private symbols and to be able to communicate such information to another party, albeit with strictly plastic, not mathematical, means.<sup>68</sup> Picabia's influence, then, appears to have allowed De Zayas, for a time at least, to regain his faith in art's ability to deal with a greater variety of public concerns.<sup>69</sup>

De Zayas' abstract caricatures and the accompanying catalogue essay placed difficult art and ideas before the public with the expectation that they would be accepted and understood by at least a portion of the audience. De Zayas' exhibition, the last of the season, seems therefore to sum up the hopes and ambitions of the Stieglitz group in the spring of 1913. It promised, moreover, to both "291" members and their audience, that the gallery would continue to act on the cutting edge of the American and international avant-gardes.



## The “Debate” in Camera Work

On February 18, 1913, in a letter to his old friend, the critic Sadakichi Hartmann, written while the Armory Show was still in progress, Alfred Stieglitz described the spring exhibitions at “291.” Upcoming shows of work by Francis Picabia and Marius de Zayas, he wrote, would constitute “the last words in abstraction in plastic form.”<sup>70</sup> At the time, his enthusiasm seemed unbounded:

Heaven knows what the future has in store for us. It is all very wonderful and yet logical and very sane, although to many people the quintessence of insanity.<sup>71</sup>

The euphoria that characterised the period immediately following the International Exhibition was, however, short-lived. The furore that surrounded the event soon subsided and the wide public appreciation of modern art that Oscar Bluemner and Hutchins Hapgood had anticipated did not materialise. Moreover, despite the ambitious series of exhibitions and publications unleashed on the public by the “291” circle early in 1913, the gallery failed to regain the undisputed leadership of the modern art movement in New York. Instead, the post-Armory Show period saw the emergence of a number of centres of modernist endeavour in the city that competed with “291” for the attention of both audiences and markets. By the spring of 1914, attendance at “291” seems actually to have declined.<sup>72</sup> Stieglitz, writing in the January 1915 issue of Camera Work, a volume devoted to appraisals of “291” by some sixty-five interested persons, described the situation, and his own state of mind, some twelve months after the International Exhibition:

Another year of experimenting done....Several thousand visitors. Not, by far, as many as in previous years. Curiosity seekers have fallen away....I sat in my room thinking, weighing, what had been done in the year. Had anything been done? Anything added?...What work was to be done in the following year?<sup>73</sup>

Stieglitz’s comments bear witness to a sense of anticlimax in the wake of the promise held out by the Armory Show that is in strong contrast to the optimism expressed two



years earlier in his letter to Hartmann. Independent accounts from 1914 corroborate Stieglitz's own assessment of the situation. Henry McBride, the art critic for the *New York Sun*, after a visit to "291" in late 1913 or early 1914, found the participants to be demoralised, and speculated on the reasons:

Of course business is not what it was. The great eruption of last year, when the armory exhibition showed us fashions in art that none of us had dreamed of...cannot be duplicated even in miniature so soon. Nature requires time to store up sufficient steam, gas or whatever it is for loud noises. But on the other hand it would never do to close up the shop. Mr. Stieglitz therefore resumes business at the old stand.<sup>74</sup>

The consensus of contemporary opinion seems to have been that the Armory Show had explained modern art so thoroughly that, for the time being, nothing more remained to be said.

An examination of the exhibitions organised by "291" during the winter of 1913-14 provides further evidence of a lack of firm direction at the gallery. Exhibitions during that year were neither as ambitious nor as focused as those of the previous spring, nor did they cause a similar amount of interest in the press.<sup>75</sup> Figurative and abstract drawings by the American artist, Abraham Walkowitz, led off the season in November, and continued to be on display well into January of the next year. Recent painting by Marsden Hartley, an American living in Germany, followed, to be succeeded by an exhibition of children's art, the second such event at "291." The only important European modernist shown was Constantin Brancusi, whose sculpture had already been seen in quantity at the Armory in the previous year. Paintings and drawings by Paul Haviland's brother, Frank Burty, an artist who combined modern styles into a pleasant pastiche, made up the last show of the season.<sup>76</sup> Much of the work in these exhibitions was exciting and important, but, to answer the question Stieglitz set himself in January 1915, added little that was really new. If the defensive tone taken by Paul Haviland in his notes for *Camera Work* on these exhibitions is any indication, "291" insiders were themselves not entirely satisfied with what they had



accomplished. Writing on the Brancusi show, for example, Haviland felt it necessary to point out that, while the International Exhibition had displayed plaster casts of the sculptor's work, "291" showed the finished bronzes, and its exhibition thus constituted "the first occasion on which America [had] seen the originals."<sup>77</sup> Haviland also attributed the failure of Burty's genial paintings to attract much attention, not to the shortcomings of the pictures themselves, but to the deficiencies of the New York audience, found to be "ever looking for sensationalism."<sup>78</sup>

Several other factors, in addition to a sense of aesthetic aimlessness, contributed to disillusionment at "291." Francis Picabia, whose art and ideas had been such a strong stimulus to experimental activity at the gallery, returned to France in April of 1913. No American artist or critic, not even de Zayas, possessed Picabia's quick intelligence or his faith in the validity of the more extreme manifestations of modern art, and his departure was a setback to the radical course the group had tentatively embarked upon. In 1914, moreover, Stieglitz suffered a series of personal misfortunes that substantially reduced his ability to participate in the activities of the gallery. Early in that year, his long-time friend and colleague, Joseph Keiley, died after an unexpected illness, throwing Stieglitz into a deep emotional depression.<sup>79</sup> Certain other close "291" associates, including Sadakichi Hartmann, Benjamin de Casseras, and Eduard Steichen, also drifted away for various personal and professional reasons. Then, late in 1914, Stieglitz fell in love with the artist and poet Katherine Rhoades, only to discover, to his great disappointment, that she had no romantic interest in him.<sup>80</sup> These distractions came at a time when "291," which had become almost indistinguishable from Stieglitz himself, most needed his leadership and creative input, and had the effect of leaving a void at the gallery's centre that could not be completely filled by his associates. Not surprisingly, after the summer of 1913, Camera Work was published with decreasing frequency and in a less substantial form than in previous years. These



later issues, made up largely of reprinted reviews, cannot have helped to attract new readers.<sup>81</sup>

The most important cause of disillusionment at "291" in 1913 and 1914, however, was an awareness that, despite the declining interest in modern art among the general public, it had, in the year following the Armory Show, attracted to itself an affluent audience that often looked to sources other than "291" for guidance on artistic matters. To Stieglitz's satisfaction, appreciation for modern art had increased in certain bohemian quarters, most notably in Greenwich Village, where it was identified with a more general revolt against convention. A number of Greenwich Village radicals, including Hippolyte Havel, Mabel Dodge, and the artists Emil Zoler and Adolf Wolff, formed close ties with "291" at this time.<sup>82</sup> But the new art also attracted the attention of a much wealthier, more fashionable, segment of society that had little interest in social revolution, but which found in modern art something fresh and exciting.<sup>83</sup> Many of these people looked on the viewing of art more as a social than an intellectual occupation, and were not interested in lectures on its spiritual import from the likes of Alfred Stieglitz. An anonymous critic writing for the New York Sun in December of 1914 described the associations that modern art held for some viewers at the recently opened Carroll Galleries:

Who shall say that the return of Cubism is bad for business? Ask in Delmonico's [the fashionable restaurant]. They know! There has developed a distinct reciprocity between Delmonico's and the Carroll Galleries. I have seen nice white whiskered old gentlemen and lovely ladies in Persian costume descend the Delmonico steps after luncheon....some invisible force pulls them....into the Carroll Galleries before they are aware.....They stay all afternoon. There is something about modern art that makes the eyes of a lovely woman shine....Then too it is all so wonderful and so - so - inexpressible.<sup>84</sup>

Further evidence of an interest in modern art among affluent sectors of New York society is provided by the exposure it received in a number of fashionable magazines, including Puck and Vanity Fair. These magazines, which frankly set out to



divert their readers, catered to:

the leisured classes (although not always for the very rich)- for sophisticated urbanites, for the kind of person who was well travelled, well read, well acquainted; for people who wanted to be entertained, but on an exalted plane....<sup>85</sup>

In 1914 a number of “291” insiders, including Marius de Zayas and Benjamin de Casseras, themselves formed an association with Puck, a New York weekly that published caricatures, political satire and society gossip, as well as a certain amount of art and theatrical criticism.<sup>86</sup> Although “291” artists and writers contributed to Puck mainly with the intention of supplementing their meagre incomes, much of the work that appeared there shows the same interest in the modern movement that characterised their contributions to Camera Work.<sup>87</sup> In 1914 and 1915, for example, Marius de Zayas produced a series of caricatures of popular entertainers and society figures for the magazine that were drawn in a distinctly “modern” style. Several of these caricatures even portrayed important modern artists, including August Rodin and Henri Matisse [Fig. 9], while others, such as “The Accidental Cubists” [Fig. 10], assumed a certain acquaintance with recent artistic trends on the part of the reader.<sup>88</sup> Abraham Walkowitz and John Marin, artists whose work had become a “291” staple, also appeared in Puck at this time.<sup>89</sup> One of Marin’s cubist influenced sketches of New York was even featured on the cover of the March 14, 1914 issue accompanied inside by a reprint of his catalogue statement for “291” and a note that read:

Do you admire this front cover? A copy of it in full colours, on very heavy, rich paper, for framing purposes, will be mailed, postpaid, anywhere in the world on receipt of twenty-five cents in United States stamps or currency.<sup>90</sup>

About the same time that “291” participants were appearing in Puck, Frank Crowninshield, the editor of Vanity Fair, also began publishing articles on modern art and artists in that magazine, and adopted “avant-garde” innovations into its layout.<sup>91</sup> The editors of both Puck and Vanity Fair thus seem to have concluded that there was enough understanding of modern art among their largely middle and upper-class



readers to warrant substantial sympathetic treatment of it in their publications.

A small segment of this new audience for modern art could afford not only to read about recent developments in magazines but to own the works of art themselves. Stimulated by the Armory Show, a number of wealthy art enthusiasts, among them the lawyer John Quinn, Chicago millionaire Arthur Jerome Eddy, inventor Dr. Albert C. Barnes, and Harvard intellectual Walter Arensberg, set about establishing significant private collections of modern art in the United States. These collectors, notably Arthur Jerome Eddy, consulted Stieglitz in their efforts to become more acquainted with the modern movement, but they soon formed other artistic affiliations as well, or, as in the case of Walter Arensberg, became important figures in the art world themselves.<sup>92</sup> To Stieglitz's annoyance, these patrons also made extensive purchases from the "commercial" galleries that had been set up in 1913 and 1914 to take advantage of expanded public interest in the modern movement. These new establishments included the Daniel Gallery, owned by the former barman, Charles Daniel, the Washington Square Gallery, under the proprietorship of Picasso enthusiasts Robert Coady and Michael Brenner, and the Carroll Galleries, operated by Harriet Bryant with the backing of John Quinn and artistic advice from Armory Show organisers Walt Kuhn and Walter Pach. Encouraged by the success of the Armory Show, more established art dealers, notably N. E. Montross, also ventured into the field of modern art.<sup>93</sup>

Many of these new art dealers demonstrated a commitment to the modern movement second only to that of Stieglitz himself. Like Stieglitz, they exhibited work by important European and American artists, often in innovative contexts, and often with the intention of bringing new work before the public. Coady and Brenner, for example, were the first to exhibit African sculpture as art in the United States, and, in 1916 and 1917, Coady published The Soil, a groundbreaking magazine that called for an art based on the American urban environment.<sup>94</sup> The Carroll Galleries, which soon



became identified with Cubism, showed work by Marcel Duchamp and other French artists after they arrived en masse in New York in 1915, and also hosted the first exhibition of the American Synchromists. N. E. Montross organised shows by such major European artists as Cézanne and Matisse that were much larger than those Stieglitz was able to put on, and held group exhibitions of younger American painters as well. While a “commercial” stance on the part of the owners of these galleries seems not to have precluded a considerable commitment to modern art, most of them did manifest a somewhat different attitude toward the sale of their wares than that which prevailed at “291.” The notion that modern art stood in opposition to American materialism and hypocrisy was not a point of dogma at the Montross or Carroll Galleries. The art exhibited there was frankly for sale, and could be had by anyone who showed interest in it.

Not surprisingly, Stieglitz himself soon formed a deep antipathy toward these newcomers on the New York art scene. While he did not greatly mind the financial losses, which cannot have been very substantial, he seems to have keenly felt the challenge that these establishments presented to his monopoly on the presentation of art in the city. He believed that the owners of the “commercial” galleries and their advisors, who were often the same men who had organised the Armory Show, were profiting from his long lonely struggle for modern art in America, and he also feared, with some justification, that less experienced and less scrupulous vendors would attempt to pass off inferior work on a gullible American public.<sup>95</sup> The suspicion with which the motives of these men were viewed at “291” is conspicuous in the correspondence between Stieglitz and de Zayas on these matters from the summer of 1914. De Zayas had travelled to Paris in May of that year with the intention of renewing his contacts with the French avant-garde, and in order to collect works of art for display at “291.” To his disappointment, he discovered that the recently opened Washington Square Gallery had obtained exclusive New York rights to Picasso’s current production from



his agent, D. H. Kahnweiler. Without the presence of Picasso, one of the best known of the modern artists, "291" was in real danger of presenting another lacklustre series of exhibitions during the upcoming season. Although de Zayas can have known little about Coady and Brenner, he wrote to Stieglitz on May 27 that "he [Brenner] is going to be a danger to modern art in America," and that "Kahnweiler is also taking a decided attitude of commercialism."<sup>96</sup> Stieglitz, in his reply of June 9, wrote that

if only he knew how slick and irresponsible, how absolutely without conscience the average American is, Kahnweiler might spare himself some great disappointment....Washington Square is to be purely commercial, and as long as Kahnweiler has become purely so, the less we have to do with him the better.<sup>97</sup>

The underlying assumption here is that only "291" had the spiritual wherewithal to resist American deception and guile, and that it alone was therefore qualified to guide Europeans across its seas of corruption.<sup>98</sup>

Stieglitz himself dearly would have liked to sell more of the work produced by his often indigent stable of artists, and had he changed his business methods he probably would have been quite successful. Stieglitz's reputation for honesty and quality, and the spiritual aura his method of presentation lent to the work on display, had the effect of giving it considerable marketability. But although Stieglitz was often able to command high prices, he continued to sell only to those people who he believed had a true understanding of the art exhibited. "291," therefore, continued, as before, to be more of an educational institution and an artist's salon than an art gallery proper. Stieglitz's intellectual investment in the old methods was too great for him to consider a substantial revision of his business practices. With his ideals under threat it must, moreover, have seemed all the more important not to change.

Stieglitz's response to the difficulties faced by "291" in the period following the Armory Show was, typically, to examine the crisis from a theoretical perspective. In



late 1913 and in 1914, Camera Work published a series of articles that addressed, at an abstract level, some of the problems that modern art had recently encountered in New York, and that attempted to provide some solutions. This “debate” in Camera Work was conducted within the framework of ideas that had been set out by “291” in the exhibitions and publications of early 1913, and dealt critically with such issues as the place of modern art in the contemporary world, the claim of abstraction to be able to effect meaningful communication, and the phenomenon of art’s sudden fashionability. Surprisingly, given the enthusiasm for abstract art displayed in the 1913 Special Issue and other publications, the arguments made in the “debate” were often aesthetically rather conservative, and drew into question some of the bases by which radical innovation had only recently been justified at “291.” Where the Special Issue had championed abstract art on the grounds that it was the necessary expression of an expanded consciousness, subsequent essays in Camera Work condemned the new art for having embraced a “plastic solipsism” that had appeal only for “aesthetic super-snobs.”<sup>99</sup> Although the magazine continued to present a variety of points of view, the size and substance of these conservative essays tended to overpower the more avant-garde materials published. Taken as a group, issues of Camera Work that appeared after the summer of 1913 constitute an intellectual regression on the part of Stieglitz and his associates that requires some explanation. It is my contention that the “debate” in Camera Work must, at one level, be read as a reflection of “291”’s uncertain situation in the New York art world, and as an attempt to solve the gallery’s practical problems by creating for it a new identity that would reposition “291” within the changed circumstances of the post-Armory Show period.<sup>100</sup>

Although the publication of these conservative essays by Camera Work can best be understood with reference to changes that were taking place in the New York art world, opinions expressed in them were undoubtedly reflective of the sincerely held beliefs of some “291” associates. The radical abstraction that had been such a



conspicuous feature of exhibitions during the spring of 1913 had been difficult for many “291” participants to accept, and it is hardly surprising that contrary opinions eventually found an outlet. Artists such as Eduard Steichen, John Marin, and Oscar Bluemner, while they agreed that the artist must interpret the world according to his or her own individual sensibility, retained a deep allegiance to recognisable subject matter and to the need for ready communication with the audience. The passing of the exhilarating intellectual climate that immediately followed the Armory Show seems to have removed the stimulant that made experiment appear to be the most important aspect of modern artistic endeavour, and allowed those with misgivings concerning the value of abstraction to gain a platform for their views.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, these misgivings seem actually to have been increased by the presence at “291” of the large painting by Kandinsky that Stieglitz had bought out of the Armory Show [Fig. 11: “Garden of Love (Improvisation #27)”). From the prominent part the example of Kandinsky played in the “debate” in Camera Work, it is clear that this painting, one of the artist’s more advanced, was the focus of much discussion at the gallery, and that for some the Russian artist had come to represent the worst case of modern art’s alienation from material and social being.<sup>102</sup> For most American artists, the purpose of abstraction in art was to enhance the power of personal expression and thus facilitate communication, aims that Kandinsky seemed to have abrogated.<sup>103</sup>

The controversy at “291” over the meaning and value of abstraction seems to have been further intensified by the response that the spring 1913 exhibitions had elicited from the public. Reviews of shows by both Picabia and de Zayas, which probably reflect wider public opinion, were almost uniformly negative, and must have been a sobering rebuke to those “291” participants who had hoped that their art would be more widely understood. While Stieglitz and his associates tended to dismiss philistine commentary on the work they exhibited, unfavourable opinions of these exhibitions were expressed even by critics who had, in the past, been quite sympathetic



toward modern art and “291.” Most painfully, several of these reviewers, including Samuel Swift of the Sun and Charles Caffin of the New York American, faulted the work of Picabia and de Zayas on the very grounds that the artists themselves maintained it was most successful. Despite Picabia’s claim to be able to communicate his ideas by means of form, Samuel Swift found that he himself could not, in fact, comprehend the “laws” of the “new convention” that the artist was trying to establish.<sup>104</sup> “It is a large order, this building up by a few artists of a new language all by themselves,” he wrote.

As the ordinary visitor looks about him he will not be likely, even with the aid of the catalogue and of Mr. Picabia’s clearly printed titles upon the top of his pictures, to perceive the relationship of the graphic result to the emotional cause....Even Stieglitz, who has been a sort of high priest of the new movements, will tell you that he ‘gets’ this one but not that. You think again of the laborious task of constructing over again an entire language, say in terms of Chinese ideographs.<sup>105</sup>

Worse still, Charles Caffin, a close friend of Stieglitz and a frequent contributor to Camera Work, claimed to see in de Zayas’ abstract caricatures nothing but “caricatures of the ‘New Evolution in Plastic Expression.’”<sup>106</sup> In what appears to have been a deliberate application of de Zayas’ critique of communication by means of form to the artist’s work, Caffin gave his interpretation of de Zayas’ intentions:

The fundamental impossibility, as he [de Zayas] sees it, is that concrete thought cannot be expressed exclusively through abstract symbols. What happens if you logically carry out the exclusive use of abstract symbols is shown in these caricatures. They are a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principles of the Extremists.<sup>107</sup>

Accusations such as these struck at the heart of the rationale that de Zayas had only recently formulated for his art and that had allowed him, for a time, to produce work comparable with that of Picabia and Kandinsky. It was, perhaps, in reaction to these criticisms that, following the spring of 1913, de Zayas interrupted the production of abstract caricatures for over a year.<sup>108</sup> More generally, these adverse opinions seem to have called for a public reexamination in Camera Work of the bases of abstraction and



the value of experiment.

The November 1913 Camera Work, which reprinted these reviews, was also the first issue of the magazine published after the Armory Show to express strong reservations with regard to abstraction in art.<sup>109</sup> The contents of the volume were diverse, and included catalogue statements from the spring of 1913, as well as reproductions of photographs by Eduard Steichen. An article by de Zayas that accompanied Steichen's work restated aspects of de Zayas' theory of modern art with reference to photography.<sup>110</sup> Dominating the issue, however, was a long essay by John Weichsel, entitled "Cosmism and Amorphism," that constituted a severe indictment of the modern movement.<sup>111</sup> Weichsel was a socialist who had only recently become acquainted with Stieglitz, and who, through him, had become aware of the changes that were taking place in art.<sup>112</sup> The title of Weichsel's essay was a reference to "Vers Amorphism," an article published in the summer Special Issue of Camera Work that purported to be the manifesto of the "Amorphist" school of painting.<sup>113</sup> Upon careful reading, it becomes clear that "Amorphist" canvases are, in fact, entirely blank, and that their supposed contents are all in the eye of the credulous beholder. Although "Vers Amorphism," which originally appeared in a Paris weekly, seems to have been published in the Special Issue as an amusing example of philistinism, Weichsel obviously read the piece with some interest. In "Cosmism and "Amorphism," he argues that the manifesto is, in fact, a quite accurate description of the present state of affairs. Abstract painters, among whom Weichsel counts the French Cubists, have indeed emptied painting of all meaningful content, and, in the process, have betrayed modern art's great promise:

...the New Artist's world is focused from a distance whence the corporeality of things becomes diffused in their atmosphere. Then all things abide only as form, - shape as an idea; reality as a mood. Ever higher altitudes of the New movement have been signalled by their ever increasing elimination of concreteness. Picasso, Picabia, Kandinsky have built their straight road tangent to our globe. They are marching undauntedly toward its other end....Soon they



will have stripped themselves to barenness; yet the march toward infinity is hardly begun....Aiming at Cosmism [the new art] has led to Amorphism; to a tabula rasa.<sup>114</sup>

Elsewhere, Weichsel's language is even stronger. Modern art, he writes, is "a sterile bud," "a deformed growth and abortive outcome," and "a logical miscarriage."<sup>115</sup>

According to Weichsel, the dire predicament into which art had fallen was the result of the attempts by certain modern artists to sum up the universal by means of individual consciousness, and to express the insights gained by means of private symbols.<sup>116</sup> Although Weichsel believed that the artist's rebellion against convention was justified, he maintained that the very latest insurrections were characterised by such extremism that they had sundered spirit from matter and individual from society. Weichsel's purpose in "Cosmism and Amorphism" was to help bring about a reconciliation, the beginnings of which, he believed, must come from artists themselves. In his opinion, artists should, by means of their work, attempt to contact and express a common "raciality," a concept not well defined but apparently similar to a collective unconscious.<sup>117</sup> The results of their labour would, he hoped, help to enrich both art and life, and give back to the artist a social purpose once again. Although its scope is broad, "Cosmism and Amorphism" seems specifically intended as a reply to those writers in the summer Special Issue of Camera Work who had made the most enthusiastic claims for abstraction. Thus, Weichsel specifically signalled out as examples of the thinking that had led to the emaciation of art both Gabrielle Buffet's "new state of mind to which the external world appears more clearly in the abstract," and Maurice Aisen's analogous "sixth sense."<sup>118</sup> Although Weichsel did not mention Marius de Zayas by name, his theories appear to be the focus of a severe condemnation of the application of science outside its proper sphere. "There are," he writes, "roughly three large domains of expression."

The one having a source and self-end most ancient - art. The second, operating with most up-to-date sources and ends - science. The third, which comes from



an interaction of the two previous ones is - artistry....<sup>119</sup>

...in art, the attempt to express its building material - man, intellect, imagination, experience, mass, form, color, etc., - in purely abstract...terms, has caused the transmutation of art-activity into art-scholasticism, i.e. an artisanship consisting of the interaction of two distinctly opposed spheres of activity.<sup>120</sup>

Coming on the heels of the Special Issue, the prominence given to “Cosmism and Amorphism” in the November 1913 Camera Work comes as something of a surprise. Publication of this lengthy article can, of course, be partly explained as the result of a growing influence of conservative opinion at “291” in the latter half of 1913. Faced with a rising chorus of opposition to the extreme in art, Stieglitz appears to have given Weichsel the role of devil’s advocate and allowed him to criticise the art and ideas of some of the closer associates.<sup>121</sup> There is some evidence, however, that “Cosmism and Amorphism” did, in fact, have considerable importance for Stieglitz himself, and that he cooperated with Weichsel in its preparation. On August 24, 1913, Weichsel wrote to Stieglitz thanking him for help with the paper and asking for further advice.<sup>122</sup> Stieglitz, in a letter dated August 26, replied that Weichsel’s essay was “a splendid piece of work - a valuable - a most opportune one.” He continued:

I expect printing it in the next no. and if I can manage shall strike off extra copies on cheaper paper, for this document must be more widely circulated than Camera Work can possibly be.<sup>123</sup>

Although Stieglitz’s enthusiasm for “Cosmism and Amorphism” was probably genuine, one suspects that Weichsel’s opinions were, in fact, only one of a range of views that Stieglitz wished to see articulated, and that “291” ideology had not, in fact, gone over completely to the conservative side.

In the course of 1913, and even before, Stieglitz and his associates had made an enormous intellectual investment in abstraction that could not so easily be abrogated. The exhibitions of spring 1913 and essays in the Special Issue had identified



abstraction as being on the cutting edge of modern thought generally, and had, in this way, suggested that “291”’s work in the artistic avant-garde had a far-reaching importance. Convincing arguments had been made that abstraction in art was the means by which the individual could best synthesise modern experience and express an inner vision without hindrance from external sources. Perhaps most important of all, at “291,” abstract art had come to stand for a purity of mind and spirit, and for an unwillingness to compromise in the face of social and commercial pressures, that accorded well with Stieglitz’s personal philosophy.<sup>124</sup> Given the enormous investment that had been made in abstraction, it is also not surprising that, shortly after Stieglitz had endorsed Weichsel’s essay, he made arrangements to exhibit Marsden Hartley’s recent abstract work, all of which had been produced in Germany under the direct influence of Kandinsky. Interested observers from outside “291”’s ranks also continued to identify the gallery as the prime staging ground for abstraction in America. The critic Henry McBride, in the review already quoted, remarked, in March of 1914, perhaps with some hyperbole, that

in the gallery of the Photo-Secession, where Mr. Stieglitz and his disciples hold forth for months together, there is never so much as a lead pencil sketch in the little exhibitions which may properly be said to have a subject, and the word of all other words that may be constantly overheard in the discussions there is ‘pure.’ Mr. Walkowitz’s little drawings last year were pure. This year they are still purer.<sup>125</sup>

The continued exhibition by “291” of abstract work suggests that the appearance in Camera Work of essays such as Weichsel’s “Cosmism and Amorphism” should not be taken as evidence of a complete disillusionment with the extreme in art at the gallery. I would suggest, rather, that the publication of such aesthetically conservative opinions was part of an effort by Stieglitz and his associates to distance “291” from the smart but superficial audience for modern art that was just then making its presence known, and that would soon come to frequent “291”’s “commercial” rivals.<sup>126</sup> The conservative tendency discernible in Camera Work had the effect of



informing the New York public that “291” did not merely serve up art for its entertainment value, but was a place where concerns raised by the modern movement in intelligent observers were seriously addressed.<sup>127</sup> This change in intellectual position had the effect of carving for the gallery a niche in the New York art world that was then somewhat unique, the occupation of which set “291” somewhat apart from the mainstream, and which, incidentally, promised to bring in a substantial number of new visitors. Publication of Weichsel’s essay, in so far as it indicated that “291” was willing to come down from the heights and meet the common people, was also a reaffirmation of the gallery’s social mission, as always, an important part of Stieglitz’s artistic philosophy. By keeping the point of contact with the audience at an intellectual level, moreover, “291” could hope to have an impact on the public without stooping to the methods of the for-profit galleries. That the advocacy of more conservative positions also constituted an artistic regression appears not to have mattered for the time being.

The hypothesis that the “debate” in Camera Work was, in fact, related to changes in the audience for modern art gains support from the publication in the March 1914 issue of another essay by John Weichsel, entitled “The Rampant Zeitgeist,” and an article on Abraham Walkowitz by Oscar Bluemner. Both these essays were similar in theme to “Cosmism and Amorphism” and had the effect of confirming “291” in the self-critical and somewhat retrograde direction that had been initiated by the magazine the previous fall. It is probably no coincidence that, by the spring of 1914, several “commercial” galleries specialising in modern art were operating in New York, thus making clear the true nature of the changes that had been brought about by the Armory Show.<sup>128</sup> Modern art, it must have seemed to Stieglitz, had, in spite of expectations, proved just as susceptible to commercial exploitation as more traditional work, and could not, in itself, be trusted to attract the right kind of attention. In these changed circumstances, the battles that “291” was called upon to fight concerned the places in which the new art was shown, and the kinds of reception that art patrons received



there. In the spring of 1914, therefore, it was more important than ever that “291” create for itself an image that would identify it as a centre for serious aesthetic debate and not as a place of amusement.

Weichsel’s “The Rampant *Zeitgeist*,” a considerably more polished piece of writing than his previous effort, was a vehement condemnation of all faddishness in art. Although the adherents of the “*Zeitgeist*” who draw Weichsel’s wrath include artists who pander to conventional taste for monetary gain, the main objects of his scorn are those avant-gardists and their followers who, believing in the inevitability of progress, attempt to place themselves at its head by the advocacy of idiosyncratic work and esoteric theories. Weichsel finds that members of this latter group identify themselves clearly by the confused nature of their thinking:

They have read Tarde and Le Bon and Marc Baldwin, with their whole mind, yet in their hearts they have Nietzsche [sic], who keeps himself quite up to date and speaks a fluent Bergsonian tongue. Hence, their erudite garrulity and polyglotal obscurity. Their talk is intricate. They say that, truly, the artist is of God’s grace, yet man’s tents are the temples of deity. Indeed, creative force is focused in a superman’s artistic soul. And yet, the artist is only a link in creation’s undivided chain, a consciously recording organ.<sup>129</sup>

Weichsel believed that such nebulous theorising was not only reprehensible in itself, but that it also served to remove artists farther from the community of which they rightly were a part. “There is still wanting a bridge between two human neighbours,” he asserted, “although there are scaffoldings enough to reach the Almighty.”

Hence comes the anomaly of an artist who sidles with an all-propitiating air through mob-filled streets, while his thought swaggers through the exalted spaces overhead.<sup>130</sup>

As in “Cosmism and Amorphism,” Weichsel argued that art “must not try to assume the scale of our day, to be beneficent for our time,” but must aim to be the expression of a deeper human “raciality.”<sup>131</sup> Although “The Rampant *Zeitgeist*” undoubtedly expressed Weichsel’s own beliefs, its publication by Camera Work was also an indication to the public for art that “291” would blindly accept extreme aesthetic theorising no more



readily than it would assent to artistic experimentation without public enquiry. The essay thus distanced Stieglitz and “291” further from fads current at other venues and laid claim to more intellectual territory that the gallery could call its own. Readers were informed that, although “291” had become associated with the extreme in art, it was there that “bridges” between “human neighbours” were nevertheless being built.

Weichsel’s essay was complemented in the March 1914 issue of Camera Work by an appreciation of the American artist Abraham Walkowitz by his friend Oscar Bluemner. Although the essay was entitled “Walkowitz,” it was, essentially, yet another inquiry into the problem of modern art’s attenuated means of expression. The opinions expressed were aesthetically rather conservative and are evidence of a change in Bluemner’s thinking in the months since the appearance of his enthusiastic article on the Armory Show. Bluemner’s purpose was to compare Walkowitz, whose realistic and abstract drawings were reproduced in the same volume, with Kandinsky, who, according to Bluemner, had become an extremist and cut himself off from “life”:

Walkowitz is impelled by the ‘inner necessity’: Kandinsky, however, like the other radicals, appears not to proceed gradually and inwardly, but with a mind made up to commit an intellectual feat - which is not art.<sup>132</sup>

In words that are reminiscent of Weichsel in “Cosmism and Amorphism,” Bluemner maintained that true art is actually the antithesis of individualism:

Is self-expression the highest object of art? Not unless individual talent is the instrument of the cultural spirit, mouthpiece of the human heart en masse. There is a lot of bosh, today, about guaranteeing the liberties and unmuzzled barkings of every dog and pup.<sup>133</sup>

Walkowitz, he found, had achieved the reconciliation of art and life that was coming to be of such importance at “291”:

He [Walkowitz] is Tolstoian in his affection for humanity, for the laboring, sorrowing, struggling millions which throng the east side, or frolic in the parks and on the seashore. Amidst such he absorbs and afterward records his impressions. Not in naturalistic-academic pictures, for he is the living antithesis of the Academic. Rather he proceeds in a constructive way to recreate.<sup>134</sup>



On one level, Bluemner's "Walkowitz" was a quite transparent effort to promote an artist whose work had only recently been shown at "291." The long duration of this exhibition, on view for well over a month, and the attention given to the artist in the March 1914 Camera Work suggest, however, that Walkowitz, more than any artist associated with "291," was the focus of artistic and professional hopes at the gallery during the winter of 1913-14.<sup>135</sup> Although Weichsel seems not entirely to have approved of him, Walkowitz's work did, in fact, meet some of the criteria for a "racial" art set out in "Cosmism and Amorphism."<sup>136</sup> Walkowitz worked in a simplified, almost monumental, style that had the effect of universalising his themes, which included labourers and the dancer, Isadora Duncan, as well as such sympathetic subjects as lovers and mothers with children [Fig. 12]. The enthusiasm Walkowitz aroused at "291" may also have been due to the fact that, while much of his art was realistic and readily understandable, he also worked in a more abstract style, and could thus be seen to reconcile two artistic polarities. The forms Walkowitz used in his abstract work were, moreover, often based on parts of the human body, and bore titles such as "From Life to Life I," as if to underline the connection with the humanitarian subjects of his more realistic work [Fig. 13]. Paul Haviland, in his description of Walkowitz's abstracts for Camera Work, wrote that

in those drawings where lines, suggested by the curve of a breast, the stooping of a back, the sinuosity of a hip, commingle in uninterrupted patterns, we feel as if he had translated into a graphic pattern the tactile sensations of a sensitive hand playing over the human body without sequence but with keen response. Comparing the later work of Walkowitz with that shown at his first exhibition we feel that he has become less austere while remaining just as human.<sup>137</sup>

Unfortunately, if reviews reprinted in Camera Work are any indication, Walkowitz's recent abstract work was no better understood by the general public than the art of Picabia and de Zayas.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, the terms by which it was presented in the March 1914 issue suggest that certain members of the "291" circle, including Stieglitz himself, believed that it might find an appreciative audience.



Marius de Zayas' contribution to the March 1914 issue of Camera Work, and to the "debate" that was taking place in the magazine, was his last major piece of theoretical writing, entitled "Modern Art - Theories and Representations." The essay isolated one aspect of de Zayas' thinking on modern art, the perceived gulf between form and the ideas it claimed to communicate, for closer examination. In de Zayas' opinion, while the "theories" of art and their plastic "representations" could be mutually stimulating, the one could not be a reflection of the other:

...the 'new' art is not the expression of its theories. It follows, at the same time, two criterions: one inner, conscious, subjective and absolute; and the other, outer, experimental and relative. We could say that the one is a 'mental' analysis while the other is a 'plastic' analysis. With its theories it wants to get at the subjective truth; and with its practice at the objective truth. It wants to get at the synthesis of all thought and at the essence of all facts.<sup>139</sup>

While the problem was an old one for de Zayas, the renewed interest he exhibited here in the incommunicability of ideas by form suggests that "Modern Art - Theories and Representations" was written with similar objections to abstraction made by Charles Caffin and others at least partly in mind.<sup>140</sup> Given the critical context of the essay's production, it is not surprising that de Zayas, even more than in the past, was willing to take public incomprehension of the new art into account, and was even able to appeal to this lack of understanding in order to make his point. "A theory, formulated by logical reasoning," he wrote,

might not be convincing, but is always comprehensible. Were it possible for plastic productions of modern art to be the logical reasoning of its theories they would be, if not convincing, at least understood by the generality of the art public. But they cannot be. The theories are, in relation to the plastic works, their philosophical justification; but the plastic works remain as isolated facts....An idea can only be represented by form if we give to form a conventional value.<sup>141</sup>

Although these ideas were first elaborated by de Zayas in 1912, it is significant that they should bear restatement two years later, illustrated by such examples. In light of the claims he had only recently made for the ability of his abstract caricatures to delineate personality, "Modern Art - Theories and Representations" reads very much



like a retraction of his former views, and should probably be considered as his personal response to the “crisis” of 1914. Taken together with articles by Weichsel and Bluemner in the same volume, de Zayas’ essay also reads like a variation on a common theme. All three of these authors were profoundly aware of the immense disparity between modern art’s vast ambitions and what had actually been accomplished, and of the growing estrangement between artists and audiences. De Zayas and Weichsel, moreover, were united in their contempt for efforts made by some modern artists to express metaphysical concepts in art, Weichsel because he believed that such aspirations evacuated art of the elements that gave it social meaning, de Zayas because he saw in such work a misunderstanding of what art could and could not do. De Zayas and Weichsel both wanted to see modern art aim at more practical, less speculative, ends. But while Weichsel was altogether unable to approve of abstraction in art, de Zayas could at least applaud its investigative potential, and suggest that, if audiences would learn to understand the “scientific” purpose of modern endeavour, they might find in modern art something worth looking at.<sup>142</sup>

De Zayas’ article on “Theories and Representations,” therefore, despite its distaste for much modern work, was optimistic that art did have an avant-garde future. In an interesting twist to his argument, de Zayas could even cite the proliferation of “theory” as evidence that modern art was advancing intellectually.<sup>143</sup> Like Weichsel, however, de Zayas was critical of mere fashionable speculation, which, he believed, could lead only to intellectual aberrations:

The idea of evolution....has become the primum mobile of a great majority of the followers of the modern movement of art. It has become a moral disease which has spread in the form of an epidemic of intellectualism....This epidemic of intellectualisation is responsible for those numerous cases that we so often meet with of ultra-individualism, generally accompanied by unlimited egoaltry whose expressions are the extravagant exaggerations of the discoveries made by the investigators.<sup>144</sup>

Remarks such as these were a means by which de Zayas could distinguish his own



theorising from the kind of confused thinking that Weichsel had also repudiated in “The Rampant *Zeitgeist*.” De Zayas was thus able to stake out a new intellectual position for himself, remote from the extremism that was just then becoming suspect at “291.”

De Zayas’ “Modern Art - Theories and Representations,” then, together with essays by Weichsel and Bluemner, had the effect of taking “291” in a more sober and conservative intellectual direction. If, as seems likely, this change in the gallery’s orientation was embarked upon with the effect on the public uppermost in mind, it seems not to have had the desired result. Modernist activity in New York continued to be diffused over a number of centres, and attendance at “291” continued to decline. One suspects, moreover, that the conservative course taken by Camera Work soon became a problem in itself. As “291” allied itself with more retrograde aesthetic positions it removed itself from the leading edge of the very movement with which the gallery had become so closely identified, without putting anything very substantial in its place. Rather than helping to bring about a solution to the problem of public disaffection, the “debate” concerning abstraction had the effect of making “291” appear even more inward looking and indecisive. There is, in fact, an air of unreality to the “debate” in Camera Work that probably bears some relation to the sense of aimlessness experienced by certain “291” associates in this period. While the arguments put forward were often intellectually astute, the “debate” as a whole was lacking in detail, and the precise targets of the invective released are often hard to determine. The solutions arrived at by the participants, moreover, have the disturbing quality of being imaginary solutions to what are, in fact, very practical problems. Articles such as Weichsel’s “Cosmism and Amorphism,” or Bluemner’s “Walkowitz,” suggested that the problems faced by “291” in 1913 and 1914 were closely linked to the prevalence of abstraction at the gallery, and that correction of the artistic fault would bring about a resolution of the entire predicament. Their exclusive focus on the problem of abstraction had the effect of suggesting that “291”’s isolation from the world at large and the “amorphousness” of



the canvases on display were, in a very real sense, one and the same thing. If only artists would renounce their plastic extremism, they implied, then the split between "291" and its public would also be healed. Unfortunately, the problem was more complicated than these writers seem to have realised, and involved changes in the New York art world and the growing commodification of art itself.

From the summer of 1914, Stieglitz and de Zayas seem to have realised that there were some serious shortcomings to the intellectual direction that "291" was pursuing. After the March 1914 issue, the "debate" on abstraction occupied a less prominent place in the pages of Camera Work, and more avant-garde work began to take its place. John Weichsel, the most prominent of the conservatives, was allowed to contribute only one more essay to the magazine. Published in the fall 1914 issue, this article, entitled "Artists and Others," added little that was really new to his argument.<sup>145</sup> Significantly, the previous issue of Camera Work had published the "Aphorisms on Futurism" by the English poet Mina Loy, that, in their advocacy of all aspects of the modern, were very similar to essays that had appeared in the summer 1913 Special Issue.<sup>146</sup> By means of a series of propositions, Loy argued that the individual ego was indeed sufficient to encompass the entire universe, and that the future of art lay with such efforts. As if in reply to John Weichsel, she found that extreme artistic forms were, in fact, requisite to the relevance of art for the modern world, and dismissed the notion of a collective unconscious:

MAN is only a slave of his own mental lethargy.

YOU cannot restrict the mind's capacity.

THEREFORE you stand not only in abject servitude to your perceptive consciousness --

BUT also to the mechanical re-actions of the subconsciousness, that rubbish heap of race-tradition --

AND believing yourself free -- your least conception is coloured by the pigment of retrograde superstitions.



HERE are the fallow lands that Futurism will clear --<sup>147</sup>

The subsequent issue of Camera Work, which appeared in October, 1914, immediately following Marius de Zayas' return from an extended visit to Paris, represents, save for Weichsel's last essay, a continued renewal of faith in forward-looking modernism.

### The “What ‘291’ Means to Me” Issue

Alfred Stieglitz's personal response to the unfortunate predicament in which “291” found itself in 1914, and the final soul-searching of the post-Armory Show period, was the preparation of yet another Special Issue of Camera Work. Published in January of 1915, it contained the unedited responses of sixty-eight interested persons to the question “What does ‘291’ mean to me?” The project was initiated by Stieglitz in May, 1914 and seems to have occupied more of his time and energy than any other “291” activity of that year.<sup>148</sup> Stieglitz provided his own account of the project's origins in the preface to the volume, one of the few occasions on which he committed his thoughts to print. He described how he had sat in his room during the spring “thinking, weighing, what had been done in the year. Had anything been done? Anything added?”<sup>149</sup> He soon realised that

during the past year, a certain question had been put to me, more and more frequently. The question: ‘What does ‘291’ Mean?’<sup>150</sup>

Because he found that he could not provide a definite answer to the question, he decided to turn to the interlocutors for their opinion, asking them to leave out, if possible, any reference to himself:

Why not let the people tell me what it is to them. And in telling me, perhaps they will tell each other. Some say ‘tis I. I know it is not I. What is it?<sup>151</sup>

Although Stieglitz's motives in initiating the project were probably diverse, there is no reason to doubt that he sincerely believed the answers submitted would give him a



better idea of the impact “291” was having on people whose opinion he valued most, and that the information obtained might help him to chart the gallery’s future course. The project reveals “291” in its ostensibly most receptive mode, and, as such, is yet another example of the application, on Stieglitz’s part, to the public arena for a sense of creative bearings. It can be seen as a continuation, by somewhat different means, of the inquiry into the problem of art’s relevance that had already been undertaken by Camera Work.

In many respects, the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue of Camera Work was quite successful. More people than anticipated asked to be involved in the project and almost all the contributions received praised Stieglitz’s efforts on behalf of modern art in America. Even Arthur Hoeber, a critic unremittingly hostile to all modern tendencies in art, used the occasion to commend Stieglitz’s personal courage and integrity.<sup>152</sup> The volume, which appeared at a time when the gallery’s position in the New York art world was under threat, also provided it with some badly needed advertising. When the issue is judged on the basis of the criteria that Stieglitz set out in his preface, however, the volume can be seen to have some serious shortcomings. In spite of Stieglitz’s request for spontaneous opinions, the answers received said little about “291” that was very new, and were couched in such similar terms that the volume took on an almost mind-numbing uniformity. In spite of his explicit request, moreover, almost all the respondents wrote at length about Stieglitz’s own unique qualities, even going so far as to make no meaningful distinction between Stieglitz and the gallery.<sup>153</sup> Worse still, the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue offered few insights into the place “291” occupied in American life or in the New York and international art worlds. Few of the contributors demonstrated an awareness that, as the volume was in preparation, “291” was going through something of a crisis of confidence, and therefore had few suggestions as to how the gallery might escape the sense of irrelevance that, for insiders, had become such a serious problem. One suspects that this blindness to “291”’s misfortunes was



not entirely unpremeditated, and that many contributors deliberately chose to use this opportunity not to dwell on “291”’s shortcomings but to acknowledge Stieglitz’s undeniably significant contributions to art in America. Most of the people involved must also have realised that it would be imprudent to offend such a powerful member of the artistic community, and thus kept any unfavourable opinions to themselves. The only significant exception to the general chorus of approval was the reply submitted by Stieglitz’s old colleague, Eduard Steichen, which will be considered below in some detail.

The list of contributors to the volume, conveniently provided at the front, is of some interest in itself, and provides some evidence of the kinds of people who visited “291” and read Camera Work.<sup>154</sup> All the “291” insiders, including Marius de Zayas, Paul Haviland, and Agnes Meyer, were, of course, represented, as were those artists, such as John Marin and Abraham Walkowitz, who were closely associated with the gallery. Man Ray, Adolf Wolff, Emil Zoler, and other artists active in New York, also participated. Such photographers as Anne Brigman, Francis Bruguiere, and H. Mortimer Lamb, who admired Stieglitz’s spirit and who had not been completely disaffected by his recent enthusiasms, formed another sizable group. Contributions also came from a number of important writers and critics, including Alfred Kreymborg and Djuna Barnes, and from Greenwich Villagers such as Mabel Dodge and Hippolyte Havel. Interestingly, many of the contributors were women and a surprising number lived outside New York City. Taken as a whole, the list suggests that “291” activities were followed with interest by quite a large number of persons active in literary and artistic fields in New York and by a substantial number of intelligent lay enthusiasts as well. The variety of persons who chose to participate in Stieglitz’s project and the complimentary nature of the replies received raises the question of why he and other “291” associates were, in fact, so intent on questioning the gallery’s continued usefulness. Significantly perhaps, while several gallery owners, including N. E.



Montross and Charles Daniel were included, the collectors who had recently turned their attention to modern art did not participate, and, with the exception of Arthur Davies, neither did the organisers of the Armory Show who had become their advisors.

The contributions contained in the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue of Camera Work form a valuable compendium of the metaphors and images that were used to describe the gallery. The very uniformity of the responses submitted leads one to suspect that a rather limited number of conceptions of “291” and its activities were current, and that these most likely had a common origin in the Stieglitz circle itself. The reply submitted by Hutchins Hapgood is typical in its use of imagery and in the importance it placed on the person of Alfred Stieglitz. “‘291’ to me,” Hapgood wrote, is a ‘Salon,’ a laboratory, and a refuge - a place where people may exchange ideas and feelings, where artists can present and try out their experiments and where those who are tired of what is called ‘practical’ life may find a change of spiritual atmosphere.

I go there when my irritation is intense - as to a cooling oasis. I go there to meet a rare human group in which is nourished a strenuous love for human expression. I go there to see Alfred Stieglitz, to live for an hour in his spirit, to realize his pure courage and to feel his genuine attempt to get at what is called truth, which is something that may be felt but which is never defined. Because he loves the truth he is hospitable to all who feel they have some vision, no matter how slight, and even to those who desire the vision but know they have it not.<sup>155</sup>

Hapgood’s reply is most representative in its claim that the values prevailing at “291” were different from and opposed to those current in society as a whole, and that the gallery provided a refuge for individuals tired of American corruption and materialism. “Oasis,” “home,” “church,” and “clinic” were among the many terms descriptive of a place of rest used by contributors to suggest the healing power that the little gallery seems to have possessed.<sup>156</sup> Other writers went even farther than Hapgood and described “291” as an “up-side-down house,” or as as a “modern ‘Cour de Miracles,’ where kings can be found in beggars’ clothes.”<sup>157</sup> Frequently, the difference between “291” and the American mainstream was imaged in spatial terms, as the gallery was



contrasted with the busy street below.<sup>158</sup> Despite their similarity, many of the replies that remarked on the difference between “291” and the larger American culture were nevertheless quite personal and heartfelt, often forming short testimonials to the effect that Stieglitz and “291” had on contributors’ lives. Oscar Bluemner, for example, recounted how, after coming to the United States, he had given up painting altogether, along with all hope for the future of art in America, which he described as a land where “all things especially artistic ones, pale into utter insignificance before...the great stomach-question, the mark of which is \$---.”<sup>159</sup> One day, however, while walking the New York streets, he noticed a small sign in a doorway that read, “Photo-Secession.” Bluemner entered the establishment, struck up a conversation with the proprietor, and, after some initial skepticism, realised that Stieglitz was an exception to the American norm. “On that day,” he wrote, “it dawned upon me that there was still hope.”<sup>160</sup>

An unintended consequence of the repeated description of “291” as standing apart from the American mainstream was the insinuation that the gallery played an essentially passive role in its relationship with the world outside its doors. When the gallery was labelled a “refuge,” an “oasis,” or a spiritual “home,” contributors implied that “291” was, in fact, not an active force in American culture, but only a place where those tired of modern life could seek temporary refreshment. The frequently expressed opinion, also found in Hapgood’s contribution, that “291” could not be accurately defined, served to reinforce this impression of passivity. For Stieglitz and other “291” insiders, disturbed by the gallery’s apparent lack of purpose, this news of its essential quietism cannot have been very welcome.

Fortunately, other contributors were of the opinion that “291” was engaged in a more dynamic relationship with the world at large. From this perspective, “291” was seen only to be engaging in a temporary retreat from life, the better to rally its forces before battle. “291,” they found, was a place of vigorous activity that stood at the all-



important nexus between inner consciousness and outer reality. Some such conviction seems to underlie the frequently encountered description of "291" as a "laboratory" and an "experimental station."<sup>161</sup> Use of these analogies implied that "291" took in data from the outside, examined and weighed it, then returned the results to the world for the greater benefit of all. More elaborate scientific and technological metaphors had a similar import, and suggested that "291" was a powerhouse of transforming energies. Helen R. Gibbs, identified as a "teacher of children, and writer" from New York, for example, used a bewildering array of scientific images in her attempt to get at the gallery's meaning.<sup>162</sup> "291" for her was

...a positive electron ever ready to use its powerful dynamic force for the destruction of the deadly microbe. Being positive, it cannot be isolated - tho it stands alone. It is a strain centre in stable orbital motion round a common centre - recognizable and identified.

The electric waves produced are circulated by Heat, Friction and Action, or, if you will, Passion, Thought, and Expression. The works shown at '291' are comets which go on their way with all their strength and never make apologies, even if their tails should strike the earth. Shock absorbers are not necessary, nor are they desired....

And so the wheel turns on throwing off its electric sparks....<sup>163</sup>

Biological analogies were used in a similar fashion to suggest an interplay between "291" and something greater than itself. Once again, none of these usages was very original to the contributors themselves, but formed part of the lore that had accumulated around "291" over the years.<sup>164</sup> Thus, a large number of contributors described the gallery as being "alive," or as "growing." For artist William Zorach, "291" was "a wonderful living place palpitating with red blood," while [Mrs.] Clifford Williams found "291" to be "a little room where the quality of life one seeks in the upstretching of green things, the singing of birds, shows itself thro human beings."<sup>165</sup> Assertions such as these implied that "291" was in touch with sources of life not open to most Americans, and, more importantly, that the vital energy possessed by the gallery was likely to increase and expand beyond its narrow confines. Some contributors even described "291" as being in the process of giving birth. Man Ray was



of the opinion that “the gray walls of the little gallery are always pregnant,” while long-time associate, Dallett Fuguet, wrote that “291” is the home of “one by aid of whose mental and aesthetic midwifery many enquiring minds have brought forth ideas that were new unto themselves” (for a visual example see de Zayas, “L’Accoucheur d’idées” [Fig. 14]).<sup>166</sup> Analogies such as these showed “291” not to be in retreat from the world, but as the very place at which the universe came into being. An English contributor, photographer Ward Muir, neatly summed up the reciprocal relationship with the outside world that these biological metaphors implied. For him,

Two-Nine-One is like one of those minute specks which a scientist shows you, protoplasm or cell or seed or whatever it is, which guards the something in them, life, by virtue whereof they grow or subdivide and increase and multiply - or sprout into a plant with frail swaying blossoms but a sturdy stem....The plant draws its sustenance from outside: only from inside comes the power of its chemistry to transform that sustenance into the flowers or fruit. Now it is the same with Two-Nine-One. It is immensely in touch with the world....<sup>167</sup>

Replies such as these, even though they were couched in rather familiar terms, must have been very reassuring for Stieglitz and his associates. They suggested that “291,” despite its difficulties, was still a vital and active force that had a significant influence on the world, at least at the artistic and spiritual levels.

Some sense of unease, however, can perhaps be discerned in the responses submitted by certain members of the inner circle at the gallery. Paul Haviland, for example, like many other contributors, wrote at length about the lack of definition that seemed to permeate the idea of “291.” For Haviland, the gallery

...teaches nothing, for the professorial attitude is contrary to its spirit. It is made up of heterogeneous elements, representing conflicting and irreconcilable points of view with all of which no one man could ever agree.<sup>168</sup>

He found that he could not say what “291” means to him because

it has meant something different, something new, every time I have come into contact with it. It will continue to mean new things to me for it is alive. There is one definite thing which I can always depend on finding there: Opportunity.<sup>169</sup>

Haviland meant his remarks to be complimentary, but his inability to describe the



gallery very accurately left the impression that it was lacking in a certain energy and purpose. In his contribution, Marius de Zayas was able to be somewhat more precise, but also implied that he was not entirely happy with the way things were going. De Zayas made use of the occasion to set out his own philosophical and methodological point of view, a position that was, in some respects, at odds with the idealistic ways of thinking common in the Stieglitz circle. He belonged, de Zayas asserted,

to that class that Carlyle describes as ‘cause and effect speculators,’ a class for whom no wonder remains wonderful, but all things in Heaven and Earth must be accounted for. This mental attitude is, indeed, not at all romantic, but to my belief just as good or just as bad as any other.<sup>170</sup>

In de Zayas’ opinion, “291”’s primary purpose was scientific. Its rooms were, he wrote, “a Gallery of Effects to be taken as points of departure to get at the Causes and at the Mechanism.”<sup>171</sup> Although de Zayas’ remarks were very brief, he began, by means of comments such as these, to suggest that “291” should take its investigative responsibilities seriously and start to operate more like a real ‘laboratory.’ Like Paul Haviland, he also had trouble saying just what “291” is. Although he wrote that “291” was “not an Idea nor an Ideal, but something more potent, a Fact, something accomplished,” he also found it to be “by no means final or conclusive, but much to the contrary.”<sup>172</sup> In the paragraph dealing with Stieglitz, moreover, de Zayas seemed to regret the gallery’s self-imposed limits:

291. Expression of the Present brought out by one man, to keep in constant evidence the spirit of the time, apparently, only in its artistic production and in its artistic judgment.<sup>173</sup>

In 1915, de Zayas’ misgivings concerning the course “291” was pursuing would become more public, and he would, by means of 291 magazine and other projects, attempt both to establish the gallery’s identity more firmly and to broaden its horizons.

Anxiety concerning “291”’s nature and purpose, only hinted at in the contributions by Haviland and de Zayas, was more overt in the lengthy response submitted by Eduard Steichen, Stieglitz’s old colleague in the running of the gallery.



This piece, which can only be described as a tirade, took “291” severely to task for having failed to show any significant progress since the Armory Show. Despite its perspicacity, the critique probably should not be taken entirely at face value. When it was written, Steichen was still very much under the influence of Symbolist aesthetics, and therefore hostile to Cubism and the other radical styles that had come to prevail at the gallery. Because of these aesthetic differences he had, much to his annoyance, been shut out of many “291” activities. Steichen and Stieglitz, moreover, had also had serious differences of opinion with regard to the European war, which had begun late in August of 1914, only shortly before Steichen wrote his contribution. In spite of his distaste for Cubism, Steichen was a staunch Francophile, while Stieglitz admired Germany above all nations and found it difficult to blame that country for the war. Steichen’s response, then, may have been written in the heat of the moment and been partly motivated by personal considerations.<sup>174</sup> Whatever the case, the analysis he offered of the gallery’s problems and prospects was nevertheless timely and insightful. He led off his contribution with a heated denunciation of the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue itself, which, he believed, had served only to turn the gallery’s attention inward. “I resent this inquiry into its meaning as being impertinent, egoistic and previous,” he wrote. “Previous in so far as it makes the process resemble an obituary or an inquest, and because it further tends to establish a precedent in the form of a past.”<sup>175</sup> He claimed that the process of ossification at “291” had been going on for some time and that recently the gallery had contributed nothing new in either art or ideas.

During the past year, possibly two years, ‘291’ has seemed to me to be merely marking time. It had obviously reached a result in one of its particular efforts and had accomplished a definite result within itself and for itself; - and for the public at large it had laid the way for others to successfully organize the big International Exhibition of Modern Art held at the Armory in 1913.

Whether it was the discouragement that follows achievement, or a desire to cling to success and permanently establish its value, or merely a consequent inertia caused by the absence of new or vital creative forces I am not prepared to discuss here - but “291” was not actively a living issue.<sup>176</sup>

Steichen’s greatest complaint, however, was that “291” had not responded adequately



to the European war.

If ever there came, within our time, a psychological element of universal consequence that could rouse individuals out of themselves as individuals and grip humanity in its very entrails, surely it was this one.<sup>177</sup>

Instead, “291” had “continued the process of producing a book about itself - and calmly continued its state of marking time.”<sup>178</sup> Steichen’s contribution, then, faulted “291” for failing to maintain those very links with the contemporary world that were of such importance to “291” insiders, and which were an object of considerable praise among the other contributors. Although his comments may have been sparked by a disagreement with Stieglitz, they transcended their immediate context to offer a critique of the self-accusing and inward-looking tendency of recent years, one example of which had been the protracted debate about art’s relevance conducted in the pages of Camera Work. Like de Zayas, Steichen, even as he recognised the value of “291”’s “receptivity,” saw a need for the gallery to assume a more distinct identity and to play a more active role in affairs.

In so far as the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue of Camera Work attempted to define “291” with somewhat greater clarity, preparation of the volume was, of course, itself an effort to confront the indecisiveness that Steichen had condemned and that seemed to threaten the gallery’s continued effectiveness. Moreover, whatever its shortcomings, the issue was effective advertising for “291” and, as such, served to involve it more directly in the New York art world. Preparation of the volume, which extended over several months, itself brought the gallery to the renewed attention of some of the most important figures in New York art and literary circles, many of whom, as we have seen, used the occasion to describe its activities in the most glowing terms. Although it is hard to determine just how widely the issue was distributed, it must have been read by a large proportion of persons involved in those same circles, and was even reviewed appreciatively in the metropolitan dailies. Arthur Hoeber, for example, the conservative critic who participated in the project, wrote a favourable



review of the volume for the New York Globe in which he observed that contributors had expressed a “deep appreciation for the freedom of thought and the liberty offered to the exhibitors,” and that “a note of friendliness, even affection for the promoter, Mr. Stieglitz,” was much in evidence.<sup>179</sup> For the more general reader the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue presented a singularly kind and democratic picture of “291” that would certainly have increased its popular appeal. Although the ranks of contributors were made up mainly of artists and critics, they also included persons from much more ordinary occupations and social situations, thus implying that participation in “291” was open to a wide variety of individuals. The candid and open-ended manner in which the discussion was conducted, moreover, informed readers that the gallery was receptive to a range of ideas and views. The opinion, expressed by many contributors, that “291” stood in opposition to the spiritual malaise of modern America promised readers that attendance at the gallery would involve them in activities that were not merely a pleasant diversion, but that were of crucial importance to the improvement of society. The scientific and technological jargon used, further suggested, in the manner of de Zayas’ essays, that “291” was an undertaking of some seriousness and relevance.

While the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue of Camera Work projected an image of the gallery that would have been attractive to many people, in the end, however, the volume failed to accomplish many of the tasks that Stieglitz had set out for it. Although he had hoped that the responses submitted would provide new insights into the nature of “291,” and that he would obtain from them some idea of what remained to be done, the published replies dealt mainly in the kinds of generalities that had been typical of Camera Work for years, and said little about the gallery that had not been said before. Significantly, the volume contained only limited discussion of modern art itself, and, beyond the observation that “291” had no part in the “immoral American Goldhurt,” did not offer concrete explanations of how “291” was relevant to the modern age or how it might lead the way to a better future.<sup>180</sup> Although the occasional writer



contrasted “291” with the “houses of art prostitution,” more extended discussions of the gallery’s place in the New York and international art worlds did not appear.<sup>181</sup> The absence of such discussions is, in fact, not very surprising, given the nature of the project and of the question that had been set. Stieglitz’s request for an appraisal of the gallery seems to have been taken by most contributors as an invitation to write only about the “meanings” of “291” that had already been firmly established. Because the definition of the institution had, in the past, been deliberately kept vague, it was probably to be expected that the main thing Stieglitz learned about “291” was that one could not say what it was. It is also not surprising, given Stieglitz’s own repeated identification of himself with the gallery, that most of the respondents maintained that “291” and Alfred Stieglitz were, in fact, much the same thing.<sup>182</sup> In the end, for Stieglitz, the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue must have come to seem almost like a house of mirrors, where he could see his own reflection at every turn, and where his own words were repeated back to him unchanged. Because the volume dealt with the business at hand in such a self-reflexive manner, it ultimately formed, not a solution to the predicament in which Stieglitz and his associates found themselves, but a part of the problem itself.

### **Marius de Zayas in Paris**

Marius de Zayas’ response to the problems faced by “291” in 1914 took shape during the course of a trip to France in the summer of that year. Renewal of his association with the Parisian avant-garde at this time was artistically and intellectually invigorating for de Zayas and seems to have brought about a restoration of his faith in a forward-looking modernism and in the importance of the work “291” was doing. The personal contacts and intellectual discoveries that he made in Paris also had a considerable effect on the course the gallery was to pursue in the following year, and led directly to the publication of 291 magazine. Fortunately, the letters de Zayas and



Stieglitz exchanged during this summer are preserved at Yale University and in the files of Rodrigo de Zayas in Spain.<sup>183</sup> This correspondence, which has not been adequately examined in the literature, offers considerable insight into the purpose of the trip and its outcome.<sup>184</sup>

De Zayas arrived in Paris on May 13, 1914, and returned to New York on or just before September 12.<sup>185</sup> Although most of his visit was spent in Paris, de Zayas may also have made a brief side trip to England and seems to have made frequent visits to Voulangis, Eduard Steichen's country place, in the company of Katherine Rhoades, Agnes Meyer, Marion Beckett, Constantin Brancusi, and Steichen himself. The aims of de Zayas' European sojourn appear to have been quite numerous. Ostensibly undertaken in order to fulfil a commission from Puck magazine to execute caricatures of important European artists and writers, de Zayas' overriding purpose, however, was to reestablish his contacts with the Parisian avant-garde after an absence of over two years.<sup>186</sup> Several important developments, including Picasso's "synthetic" phase, the advent of Futurism, and the rise of abstraction as an important artistic tendency had all taken place since his last visit and he obviously had much catching up to do. Such periodic tours of Europe for the purpose of artistic renewal were, in fact, common practice for the members of the Stieglitz circle, as they were among American artists and intellectuals generally. In 1914, however, such a trip had an unusual urgency for de Zayas and Stieglitz. The two men seem to have realised that if the declining fortunes of "291" were to be reversed, the gallery would have to establish closer ties with the sources of the modern movement with which it was so closely identified. Increased competition from the "commercial" galleries in New York, moreover, made the acquisition of European art for display at "291" of the utmost importance. Without a substantial amount of recent work by acknowledged European masters on the walls of the gallery during the winter Stieglitz ran the very real risk of presenting yet another



lacklustre season.<sup>187</sup>

But de Zayas also had some more personal artistic and professional reasons for making the trip to France. Like many advanced American artists he often found it hard to maintain his modernist faith in the face of philistine opposition and the perceived threat from American commercial culture, and looked on visits to the more enlightened countries of Europe as a means of spiritual resuscitation. Although de Zayas possessed a substantial commitment to “291” and art in America, he had a greater love for things European, and, when in Europe, seems to have been at his best, both emotionally and intellectually.<sup>188</sup> De Zayas’ art and ideas, moreover, despite their considerable sophistication, were ultimately derived from European models and he must have hoped that renewed contact with the Parisian avant-garde would provide him with further creative inspiration. As we have seen, in 1913 and 1914, de Zayas’ scientifically based art had fallen into some disrepute at “291” and he probably travelled to Paris in the expectation that his work would find there the appreciative audience it lacked at home.

De Zayas was not to be disappointed. Shortly after his arrival in Paris he got in touch with his old friend, Francis Picabia, who soon introduced him to Guillaume Apollinaire and the artists and writers of his circle. In 1914, Apollinaire was perhaps the best person for an aspiring modernist to know in Paris. The French poet and critic was erudite, articulate, and intensely interested in a variety of modern artistic and literary activities. As editor of a monthly periodical, *Les Soirées de Paris*, and arts reporter for a number of widely distributed Parisian magazines, Apollinaire was also a skillful promoter of work that he thought important. In recent years, Apollinaire had championed the abstract art of Delaunay, Picabia and others, which he had defined and categorised under the heading of “Orphism.”<sup>189</sup> In mid-1914, however, he was attempting to subsume a number of recent avant-garde tendencies into a new movement, labelled “Simultanism,” of which he offered his own “calligrammes” as the



prime example. The calligrammes were little “total” works of art that combined lines of poetry into evocative pictorial forms in the hope that such simultaneous stimulation of the senses might suggest the true ambience of modern life [Fig. 19: “Voyage”].<sup>190</sup> At the time, Apollinaire was eager to embrace work that seemed to have points in common with his own artistic programme, including that of interesting artists from the United States.

De Zayas and Apollinaire seem to have become friends quickly and the French critic soon made efforts to introduce the caricaturist to the Parisian public. On May 25, 1914, Apollinaire enthusiastically announced de Zayas’ arrival in the Paris-Journal:

M. de Zayas, qui a renouvelé avec un talent extraordinaire l’art de la caricature et qui introduit en Amérique Picasso et Picabia...se trouve en ce moment à Paris, dans le but de faire la caricature des hommes les plus nouveaux de tous les arts, la littérature et la musique.<sup>191</sup>

On July 9, Apollinaire devoted his entire column in the magazine to an appraisal of de Zayas’ art. Proclaiming himself to be of the opinion that de Zayas was one of the only true caricaturists now active, he noted that his “incredibly powerful” works employed “some very new techniques,” and were thus “in accord with the art of the most audacious contemporary painters.”<sup>192</sup> Then, in July, de Zayas’ caricatures of Apollinaire, Picabia, Stieglitz, and the art dealer Ambrose Vollard appeared in the same issue of Les Soirées de Paris that also reproduced four of Apollinaire’s own calligrammes [Figs. 3, 4, 15].<sup>193</sup> In the same month, de Zayas, Apollinaire, Picabia, and composer Albert Savinio commenced collaboration on a pantomime, entitled A quelle heure un train partira-t-il pour Paris? which, unfortunately, was never completed.<sup>194</sup>

Not surprisingly, de Zayas and Stieglitz were overjoyed by the prompt and enthusiastic reception that de Zayas received in the Apollinaire circle. The letters exchanged by the two men were quite frank in this regard, and it is hard not to conclude



that such a response was just what they had sought. Initially, de Zayas seems to have approached Apollinaire with some caution, and the correspondence, as a whole, is characterised by an awareness that the Americans should maintain a certain amour propre in their dealings with him, and that they must not seem overly forward in their advances. De Zayas, however, quickly seems to have shown Apollinaire issues of Camera Work and, on May 26/27, wrote Stieglitz asking him to send copies of the magazine to “people who count,” most especially Apollinaire.<sup>195</sup> In the same letter, de Zayas described for Stieglitz the manner in which he had approached the Apollinaire group:

It must be understood that when I speak to people like those [sic] of ‘Les Soirées de Paris’... about ‘291,’ I only try to establish a friendship and by no means any relationship that might appear like if [sic] we were looking for correspondents or protection of any kind.<sup>196</sup>

Stieglitz replied on June 9:

Above all I will be only too glad to know Apollinaire gets Camera Work. I would have sent copies to him long ago, but I did not want to make it look as if we wanted to get something out of him. You know how easily decent motives are misconstrued even by the most decent of people. But now that you have brought about the connection between “291” and those [sic] little crowd we are not so apt to be misunderstood.<sup>197</sup>

On July 1, 1914, de Zayas informed Stieglitz that “the last word in art in Paris is ‘Simultanism’ in literature,” and that “Apollinaire is the father of it.”<sup>198</sup> De Zayas seemed most impressed by the French poet, whom he described as “really the deepest observer of superficiality,” and remarked that “we have become good friends.”<sup>199</sup> A letter written by de Zayas a week later is the most explicit concerning his motives in “establishing a friendship.”

I am working hard in making these people understand the convenience of a commerce of ideas with America. And I want to absorb the spirit of what they are doing to bring it to ‘291.’ We need closer contact with Paris. There is no question about it.<sup>200</sup>

Apollinaire, it seems, had just asked him for some caricatures to be published in Les Soirées de Paris, and de Zayas was quite beside himself with joy. He wrote to Stieglitz



that

they asked for them and I thought it good for all of us to really get in with this crowd.<sup>201</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that the caricatures reproduced in Les Soirées de Paris juxtaposed Apollinaire, the leader of the Parisian avant-garde, with Stieglitz, the champion of the modern movement in America.

The positive response accorded to de Zayas' in Paris during the summer of 1914 was, no doubt, motivated by the Apollinaire circle's genuine enthusiasm for the man and his work. De Zayas was an intelligent and articulate cosmopolitan, well able to appreciate the work of the French avant-garde and to participate readily in its activities. His own strange and highly abstracted caricatures, in fact, had much in common with the recent productions of European movements, especially the art of the Futurists.<sup>202</sup> De Zayas' work appeared, in the manner of Simultanism, to combine a variety of materials to attain a completeness that transcended the limitations of any one medium. It seems likely, however, that the fact of de Zayas' American origins also played a part in the warm welcome he received. The United States and its culture were the objects of considerable curiosity in Paris just before World War I, and most especially so, it appears, in the Apollinaire circle.<sup>203</sup> Les Soirées de Paris, as part of its efforts to report on the activities of the international avant-garde, published a considerable amount of American poetry, including work by William Carlos Williams, H. D., and John Gould Fletcher.<sup>204</sup> Even more interesting for the editors of the magazine, however, were the productions of American popular culture. Maurice Reynal, in his column on the contemporary cinema, reviewed American movies with enthusiasm, usually praising American action pictures above all others.<sup>205</sup> The same issue of the magazine that reproduced de Zayas' abstract caricatures also published an article on American boxers and yet another on the American passion for baseball, which the author preferred to French sport “à cause de toute les qualités d'énergie, de vitesse et de sang-froid qu'il



développe chez ses joueurs.”<sup>206</sup> The most interesting, and perhaps the most revealing of these articles, however, was one by Harrison Reeves on American popular novels, published in the March, 1914 issue.<sup>207</sup> Reeves expressed surprise that Harvard professors only took it upon themselves to write learned essays on obscure European subjects, while neglecting such native gems as the Nick Carter books, in his opinion, a much more authentic form of American expression.<sup>208</sup> Reeves observed that such novels, although worthy of considerable praise, were, in fact, only appreciated by the American lower classes and looked down on by those with pretensions to culture as nothing but “un poison pour l’esprit des enfants.”<sup>209</sup> Tellingly, Reeves found that only educated Europeans were able to discern what was truly vital in American culture:

Il n’est pas étonnant que M. Day, ou quiconque a écrit Nick Carter, ait souffert du mépris qui plus tard retomba sur Walt Whitman, qui a souffert comme étant trop sauvage pour les Etats-Unis et qui a été obligé de chercher à être apprécié en Angleterre avec Algernon Charles Swinburne, Oscar Wilde et les autres personnes qui ont eu à souffrir qui a été une des causes les plus considérables parmi celles qui ont retardé le développement intellectuel du Nouveau Monde.<sup>210</sup>

The implication here, as in other articles on the United States published by Les Soirées de Paris, was that Europeans, and most especially members of the Apollinaire circle, were better able to appreciate American culture than Americans themselves. By means of these articles, Apollinaire and his associates sought to identify themselves with the vitality and modernity they believed to be inherent in American popular culture while, at the same time, reserving for themselves the prerogative of judging its worth. In the end, what was most important in this relationship was the privilege of choosing and the power that went with it.<sup>211</sup>

Because de Zayas was a representative of American high culture, he could not provide quite the same benefits that Apollinaire and his associates were able to derive from their appreciation of baseball and popular novels. Some of the same condescending attitude on the part of Apollinaire, however, was probably present in



their relationship as well. The French poet and critic, as the would-be “impresario” of the avant-garde, was eager to play the arbiter of taste to anyone willing to follow his lead, and could be quite merciless to those who would not.<sup>212</sup> The articles on American poets published by Les Soirées de Paris played this judging game with ease, and often took special care to point out the French origins of avant-garde innovations used by foreigners.<sup>213</sup> Again, as in the case of popular culture, it was Apollinaire and his friends who made the work by virtue of their public approval. When de Zayas appeared on the scene, Apollinaire, who must already have known about him through Picabia, seems to have jumped at the chance to bring a representative of the most important American modernist group into conformity. In this way, de Zayas became, at least temporarily, a member of the “Apollinaire circle.”

De Zayas’ rapid entry into the Apollinaire circle, however, probably had some more pragmatic causes as well. The American caricaturist, as agent for a well-known New York art gallery, would have been of considerable interest to Parisian artists and writers because of the exhibition and patronage opportunities that he presented. There is considerable evidence to suggest, moreover, that Apollinaire and his associates were under some misconception regarding the size of the American market for modern work, and about the importance of “291.” News of the success of the Armory Show had quickly reached Paris as well, and had reinforced the already strong French impression of the United States as a land of extraordinary wealth. Marcel Duchamp’s Cubo-Futurist canvases, which had found few buyers in France, had rapidly sold at the Armory Show and for relatively high prices. Francis Picabia had, of course, attended the Show in person and brought back glowing reports of American affluence and generosity. The magazine La Vie Parisienne reported on May 3, 1913, that Picabia had returned to Paris “enchanted with the land of dollars,” and had talked with enthusiasm about the sale of paintings “brushed in half a day.”<sup>214</sup> It is perhaps hardly surprising that when de Zayas, friend of the owner of the famous “291” gallery, appeared in



Paris, Apollinaire, forever short of cash, gave him such a warm reception. There is also some evidence that Apollinaire believed Stieglitz to be somewhat more wealthy and influential than was actually the case. On July 25, 1914, Apollinaire disclosed in the Paris-Journal that the pantomime he was producing in collaboration with de Zayas was, in fact, intended for performance in the United States.<sup>215</sup> In Souvenirs de la Grande Guerre, probably written late in 1914, he elaborated on this point:

En attendant le 25 [juillet] je fus sur le point d'aller avec Picabia et Zayas à Etival où ils allaient chez Picabia pour préparer les décors. Car la pantomime devait être jouée au mois de janvier à New York et j'y aurais été aussi. On se promettait grand succès. Les frais devaient être faits par Stieglitz qui serait facilement rentré dans ses fonds à cause de la curiosité que nos noms auraient excité à Manhattan sur les bords de l'Hudson.<sup>216</sup>

Other projects, including an exhibition of Apollinaire's calligrammes at "291," and a New York concert by Albert Savinio, were also planned for the following year and seem similarly predicated upon Stieglitz's patronage.<sup>217</sup> While neither of these endeavours came to fruition, some other French-American joint ventures, most notably 291 magazine, were more successful. Whether de Zayas and Stieglitz were aware of pecuniary motives on the part of Apollinaire is not clear, but one suspects they were, and that, provided they received something in return, were not averse to being used. De Zayas and Stieglitz, moreover, were, as always, eager to help guide innocent Europeans through the labyrinth of American corruption.

The other major purpose of de Zayas' trip, to acquire works of art in Europe for display at "291," was also very successful. As noted in the previous section, de Zayas suffered some initial disappointment when he discovered that D. H. Kahnweiler had given the Washington Square Gallery New York rights to Picasso's recent production.<sup>218</sup> Fortunately, de Zayas was able to obtain art by Picasso and Braque from Picabia's private collection, and Picabia also allowed "291" to exhibit his latest works, four large striking abstract canvases.<sup>219</sup> De Zayas, in fact, had so much art to



choose from in Paris that he could advise Stieglitz not to show Marie Laurencin, on the grounds that her work was derivative and that she was “doing exactly what Davies and his bunch did with ‘Cubism.’”<sup>220</sup> Ironically, it was the outbreak of World War I late in August of 1914 that assured the success of de Zayas’ expedition. The war had the effect of drastically curtailing artistic and intellectual activity in Paris as important artists and writers, including Apollinaire, joined the armed forces or went into exile.<sup>221</sup> The Paris art market went into an immediate decline, and artists and dealers soon looked to the United States and other countries for new commercial outlets. These developments, were, of course, much to the advantage of “291,” and de Zayas seems to have taken careful stock of the situation. In addition to the works by Picasso, Braque and Picabia already obtained, he now found that dealer Paul Guillaume was eager to let him have as much African sculpture as he could pack into his trunks.<sup>222</sup> On his return to New York, de Zayas wrote to Stieglitz in triumph that he had arrived

not flying but retreating, and with all the honours of the war, for I brought with myself the pictures of Picasso, Braque and Picabia...[and] fifteen of the best negro thing [sic] that has ever been brought to the civilised races(?) [sic]<sup>223</sup>

He went on to explain what the war meant for Europe and America:

I left France, and especially Paris in a very bad situation. Since the war started, it seemed that all intellectuality had been withered out. I believe that this war will kill many modern artists and unquestionably modern art. It was time, otherwise modern art would have killed humanity. But what satisfies me is that at least we will be able to have the last word.<sup>224</sup>

For de Zayas the war seemed to offer a sudden, serendipitous solution to all of “291”’s problems, and to provide an opportunity to erect New York in place of Paris as the centre of modern activity. The work that de Zayas brought back from France was exhibited at “291” under his direction, and had the effect of making the shows of the 1914-15 season the most ambitious and startling at the gallery since 1913.<sup>225</sup>

De Zayas seems to have returned to New York in September of 1914 with sufficiently increased professional and personal prestige to be able to assume a



predominant role in “291” affairs for the next year. Contact with Apollinaire and his circle seems also to have provided him with a renewed confidence in his own abilities and in the worth of the modern movement generally. In 1915, de Zayas produced some of the most innovative work of his career, much of it possessing an avant-garde edge that gave it points in common with the most recent tendencies in Paris. As if to celebrate de Zayas’ return to New York, and mark his ascendancy in the Stieglitz circle, de Zayas’ art and ideas were given pride of place in the October 1914 Camera Work, with the exception of the “Means to me” Special Number, the last issue of the magazine to appear for almost two years. This issue, which represents the beginning of yet another change in the gallery’s intellectual and aesthetic position, reproduced no less than ten of de Zayas’ Material and Absolute (realist and abstract) caricatures [Figs. 3-8], accompanied by a reprint of the catalogue essay he had written for his 1913 exhibition, and by a new article on de Zayas’ work by Paul Haviland. The issue was also unusual in that it contained a substantial amount of poetry, all of it by women.<sup>226</sup> This kind of combination of art and literature in one volume foreshadowed a similar interdisciplinary inclination on the part of 291 magazine, of which de Zayas was to be de facto editor. Publication of work, such as the poem by S. S. S., that dealt with problems faced by women in modern society, also anticipated the contents of 291.<sup>227</sup>

The only aesthetically conservative piece of work published in the October 1914 issue was yet another essay by John Weichsel, the last he was allowed to contribute to the publications of the “291” circle. In this essay, entitled “Artists and Others,” Weichsel expanded his ideas concerning the pernicious influence of science on art and further reprimanded the art audience for its faddish preoccupations. “Art,” Weichsel lamented,

...is degenerating into a form essentially technical. It applies to itself measures physical rather than spiritual; it seeks merely external perfection; it is dominated by its tools, rules, methods and even whims; it mistakes the symbol for the thing; it courts shadows deeming the souls.<sup>228</sup>



Art aficionados, he found, though knowledgeable, lacked a true understanding of art's meaning:

They can see the difference between a dry-point and an aquatint as easily as you or I can tell a pretzel from a doughnut. They can tell us that Greek art was not at all realistic, that Impressionism is no more it, and that a suspicion of objectivity is sufficient to hopelessly doom a work of latest art....They can prove it that there isn't a single decent art periodical in this country, and they read Stieglitz's *CAMERA WORK*, and keep otherwise up to scratch in art.<sup>229</sup>

Weichsel concluded that this flurry of activity served no useful purpose, and that it actually did more harm than good:

Having listened to and lived with these well informed art-adepts, let us ask in all seriousness; what has art done for these men and women? What has it done through them for others? Did it make them happier or better, individually and socially? Did it gratify or enoble the whole man?... Obviously, art is not now in possession of the elixir of life. In fact, it is not at all unlikely that its nectar has become virulent in today's art-atmosphere.<sup>230</sup>

As part of the "debate" that had been conducted in *Camera Work* over the space of a year, "Artists and Others" constituted a further attempt to redefine "291"'s intellectual position along more traditionalist lines. Weichsel's article, however, although of some length, was eclipsed in the October 1914 issue by the large amount of material devoted to Marius de Zayas. Juxtaposition of work by the two men, in fact, encourages one to read de Zayas' art and ideas as a reply to Weichsel, and suggests that the volume as a whole was published for the purpose of such a comparison. Reproduction of de Zayas' abstract caricatures, moreover, all of which date from the heyday of avant-garde activity at "291" in 1912 and 1913, made a connection between the present and that earlier, happier period, thus indicating to readers that the gallery would now resume its activities where the spring 1913 exhibitions had left off.<sup>231</sup> De Zayas, it seems, having obtained proof of their worth from reliable European sources, was newly confident that his work could be trusted to act as a signpost for the future, and to provide an image of "291" for the benefit of the public. The abstract caricatures, moreover, also made a statement about the people who were now important at the



gallery. The caricatures of Stieglitz, Meyer, Picabia, and Haviland together formed a group portrait of the luminaries who would dominate “291” activities in the following year.<sup>232</sup>

The essays that accompanied de Zayas’ caricatures reframed his work using some of the ideas that had recently been the subject of so much discussion in Camera Work. In his 1913 catalogue essay de Zayas, as we have seen, made the very highest claims for his art, maintaining that by means of abstract form and mathematical symbols he could communicate the very essence of an individual’s character. That his essay merited reprinting a year-and-a-half after its first appearance suggests that de Zayas, in spite of the doubts expressed in “Modern Art - Theories and Representations,” still believed its conclusions to be valid. Paul Haviland’s essay, entitled “Marius de Zayas - Material, Relative, and Absolute Caricatures,” engaged, with reference to de Zayas’ work, some of the most pressing questions of art’s meaning and relevance that had been raised by Weichsel and others.<sup>233</sup> Following an explanation of de Zayas’ art and ideas, Haviland took on the role of devil’s advocate to make Weichsel’s old charge that

...the greatest handicap of the modern worker in obtaining a hearing from the community is that he seeks to manifest his individuality without seeking a point of contact with the public.<sup>234</sup>

Haviland went on to quote a passage from the little book he had co-authored with de Zayas during the period of the Armory Show in 1913, when these issues of community had first been raised:

‘In exclusive individuality the individual works with his own individual resources for his own individual self. The moment he excludes himself from the feelings of the community, the community excludes itself from his feelings.’<sup>235</sup>

Haviland, however, in a passage which is worth quoting at length, maintained that de Zayas and his caricatures did not suffer from this fault:

Marius de Zayas seems to have found a solution to the problem of giving full sway to his personal evolution of expression, entering boldly the field of the abstract, without losing his point of contact with the community. He has found this point of contact in the fact that instead of using abstract form to express



ideas awakened in him by excitation from the outside world, i.e., making his ideas the subject of his expression, his subject remains the outside world, the people whom he represents, and his personality comes into play only to extract from his subject that which is significant. The significant thing is the psychology of the subject, not his own psychology, so that when we look at his absolute caricatures we think, not of the artist, but of his subject, i.e., the outside world represented in its abstract significance.<sup>236</sup>

Haviland, like de Zayas in his catalogue essay, also asserted that abstract form could be meaningfully used if “abstract” entities alone were represented:

[De Zayas] has avoided the inconsistency of using the abstract significance of Form to express concrete ideas. He uses logically abstract Form to express abstract characterisation. That is why his work is convincing.<sup>237</sup>

The ideas expressed in Paul Haviland’s essay are in striking contrast to the crabbed and pessimistic pronouncements on art that de Zayas had made in “Theories and Representations.” The essay, which probably reflects de Zayas’ own opinions as well, is a return to the position that the most advanced art can have something to say about the world beyond the significance of Form, and can have a meaningful place in the larger community. Haviland’s comments on “community” indicate, moreover, that de Zayas’ caricatures were presented in the October 1914 issue, as they had been in 1913, in full confidence that they would be understood and appreciated by the public. Haviland’s faith in an easy intercourse between the artist’s inner experience and outer reality, is, I would speculate, also a gauge of de Zayas’ own changing relationship with the world. Publication of the caricatures and accompanying material suggests that de Zayas now had sufficient faith in himself and his art to explore concerns external to the work of art itself, not only at the artistic level but in his professional life as well. This change in attitude was probably the result of his association with Apollinaire, who, as we have seen, had had nothing but praise for de Zayas’ art, and who was also in the process of a similar rethinking of the relationship between poetic self and objective reality.<sup>238</sup> Read as part of an ongoing discourse regarding “291”’s relationship with the world outside its doors, moreover, Haviland’s essay, and the contents of the October



1914 issue as a whole, posit a newly confident “291,” actively in touch with the public and the contemporary world, sure of itself and the radical art it exhibits.<sup>239</sup>



## Notes

1. On the Armory show and its aftermath see Milton W. Brown, The Story of the Armory Show, 2d ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); Judith Zilczer, "The World's New Art Center": Modern Art Exhibitions in New York City, 1913-1918;" Archives of American Art 14 (1974): 2-7. Judith Tolnick, "Collecting American Modernism and Modernists," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 43-58. Zilczer notes that "between 1913 and 1918, thirty four New York galleries, organisations, and private clubs sponsored approximately 250 exhibitions of American and European painting and sculpture regarded by the public as 'modern' or progressive." Zilczer, "Art's Center," 2.
2. The literature on Stieglitz and "291" is vast if somewhat unsatisfactory. The standard study of the Stieglitz circle is William Innes Homer, Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde. (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977). Although quite comprehensive it tends to exaggerate the importance of Stieglitz's role in the introduction of modern art to America, and to treat his activities somewhat uncritically. Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), written by Stieglitz's niece, is the best biography, but is marred by a similar hagiographic quality. A more jaundiced view of Stieglitz can be found in Timothy Rodgers, "False Memories: Alfred Stieglitz and the Development of the Nationalist Aesthetic," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 59-66. For Stieglitz's work as a cultural critic see Edward Abrahams, The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986) For an account of Stieglitz's publications see Dickran Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975). Other important references on Stieglitz include Bram Dijkstra, The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); William Innes Homer, ed. Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in America, 1910-25 (Wilmington, Del.: Delaware Art Museum, 1975); Ileana Leavens, From 291 to Zurich: The Birth of Dada (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983); and Dorothy Norman, Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer (New York: Random House, 1973).
3. On Stieglitz's "laboratory": Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 79-80.
4. For a discussion of Stieglitz's "method" see Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 48. For an example of the kind of conversation Stieglitz conducted with visitors see Marius de Zayas and Paul B. Haviland, A Study of the Modern Evolution of Plastic Expression (New York: "291," 1913), 16-18.
5. With reference to Stieglitz's cultural mission Edward Abrahams comments: "He saw himself as a spiritual leader whose mission was to guide the American people out of what he believed was a desert of materialism, misplaced priorities, and misguided behavior and into the Promised Land. Stieglitz, never a believer in using language precisely, did not define the promised land, but for him, 'Truth,' 'Life,' 'Spirit,' and '291' were some of its many names...." Abrahams, Lyrical Left, 95-209. See also Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 77-78.



6. Max Merz, "Zu 291," Camera Work Special Number (July 1914, published, January 1915): 39.

7. Paul Haviland, "The Home of the Golden Disk," Camera Work 25 (January 1909): 21-22.

8. Paul Haviland, "The Exhibitions at '291,'" Camera Work 36 (October 1911): 30. Haviland may, of course, also be defusing potential criticism of Picasso.

9. I am indebted here to Timothy Rodgers scathing critique of Stieglitz's activities. Rodgers finds that use of words such as "ideal," "truth," and "spiritual," "allowed Stieglitz and his sycophants to elevate and defend their ill-defined activities....More specifically, these words helped writers published in Camera Work to advance their favorable opinions of modern art despite their inability to communicate precisely what were the underlying principles that informed the art. For American artists such as Marin, these notions allowed them to avoid analytical thought and systematic procedures in their attempts to come to terms with European art, while sheltering from criticism their art of imitation." Rodgers, "False Memories," 60-61. A similar examination of Stieglitz's pretensions to photographic originality can be found in Ulrich F. Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: An Iconographic Analysis," History of Photography 9, no. 1 (January-March 1985): 1-38; and Ulrich Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis." History of Photography 8, no. 4 (October-December 1984): 249-27.

10. Hutchins Hapgood, "The Picture Show," New York Globe, 1913. Reprinted in Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 45.

11. Oscar Bluemner, "Auditor et Altera Pars: Some Plain Sense on the Modern Art Movement," Camera Work Special Number (June 1913): 25.

12. Brown, Armory Show, 240.

13. On Stieglitz's opinion of the Armory show see: Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 165-172; Davidson-Lowe, Stieglitz, 164-65.

14. Paul Haviland "An Open Letter," Camera Work 41 (January 1913): 43.

15. Alfred Stieglitz, "The First Great 'Clinic to Revitalise Art,'" New York American, 26 January, 1913. Sue Davidson-Lowe is of the opinion that the article was provided in the form of an interview with one of the critics on the newspaper's staff. Lowe, Stieglitz, 398.

16. The Armory Show was organised along educational lines, and attempted to provide the viewer with a historical perspective on modern art. See Brown, Armory Show, 112-17.

17. Bluemner, "Auditor," 26.

18. Ibid.



19. The public for exhibitions at "291" and the audience toward which promotional efforts were directed in 1913 is hard to define with great accuracy. Although many of the persons who frequented the gallery were artists and artistic hangers-on, "291" seems also to have attracted to itself a large number of curiosity seekers from a variety of walks of life, and it was these people who seem to have had the greatest importance for Stieglitz. Although his estimate that 167,000 persons visited "291" between 1905 and 1912 is probably an exaggeration, the gallery seems to have been quite crowded during controversial exhibitions, such as that of work by Matisse in 1911. My point in this section of the thesis is that Stieglitz and his associates believed the Armory Show had pointed to the existence of a potentially large audience for modern art in New York City, and that "291" activities in 1913 were organised with the intention of appealing to and defining this inscrutable public. Stieglitz made the estimate in an interview for the New York Evening Sun, April 27, 1912. Quoted in Norman, Alfred Stieglitz, 114-115.

20. Francis Picabia, "How I See New York," New York American 30 March 1913, magazine section, 11. The interview is reprinted in Maria Lluisa Borras, Picabia (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 110-11.

21. "Picabia, Art Rebel, Here to Present the New Movement," New York Times, section 5, 9. Reprinted in Borras, Picabia, 106-07.

22. "Impressions of New York of a Post-Cubist," New York Tribune, 9 March 1913. part II, 1; Reprinted in Borras, Picabia, 108. A good account of Picabia's stay in New York can be found in William Camfield, Francis Picabia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979):40-56.

23. This point is actually made by Oscar Bluemner in Bluemner, "Auditor," 26

24. Paul Haviland "Notes on '291,'" Camera Work 42-43 (April-July, 1913, published November 1913), 19

25. Francis Picabia, "Preface," Camera Work 42-43 (April-July, 1913, published November 1913), 20. The preface and its influence in the United States are discussed in Camfield, Francis Picabia, 51-56. Tashjian notes that Picabia's arguments were "couched in moderate language possibly in order to appeal to a conservative public." Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 21.

26. "Abstraction" seems to have had quite a wide range of meaning in the Stieglitz circle, and could refer to a highly conventionalised art, such as Picasso's Cubism, that retained some references to subject matter, as well as to completely non-representational work. See Judith Zilczer, "The Aesthetic Struggle in America, 1913-1918, Abstract Art and Theory in the Stieglitz Circle" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1975), 169.

27. Two pieces by Gertrude Stein, entitled "Henri Matisse," and "Pablo Picasso," had already been published in Camera Work Special Number (August 1912), 23-30.

28. A comprehensive analysis of Camera Work does not exist. Dickran Tashjian in Skyscraper Primitives, 15-28, attempts to show that Camera Work, by means of



discussions of the “anti-art” of photography, was engaged in a discourse concerning the broader meaning of art. He also discusses, albeit briefly, articles by de Zayas, Casseras, and others. Roger Piatt Hull in “Camera Work, An American Quarterly” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1970), provides a short history of the magazine and similarly reviews work by the major contributors. See also Jonathan Green, Camera Work: A Critical Anthology (Millerton, N. Y.: Aperture, Inc., 1973). Subscribers to Camera Work appear to have been a varied lot, and included many photographers, and a large number of Europeans. See the analysis of one of the few surviving subscription lists in Hull, “Camera Work,” 43-44. Most likely, many issues were given away, or loaned to individuals by Stieglitz and his associates.

29. Mabel Dodge, “Speculations,” Camera Work Special Number (June 1913), 6

30. Gabrielle Buffet, “Modern Art and the Public,” Camera Work Special Number (June 1913), 11

31. Ibid.

32. Maurice Aisen, “The Latest Evolution in Art and Picabia,” Camera Work Special Number (June 1913), 15, 16, 15.

33. Ibid, 16.

34. Ibid, 21.

35. Buffet, “Modern Art,” 10.

36. Ibid.

37. Aisen, “Latest Evolution,” 14.

38. Ibid, 19.

39. Bluemner, “Auditor,” 28-30.

40. Ibid, 26.

41. “Are you interested...,” Camera Work Special Number (June 1913), end of volume.

42. Ibid.

43. In this regard see Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 63-96, for a discussion of “cultural capital” and its means of acquisition.

44. On the decline of Camera Work see Hull, “Camera Work,” 47-50.

45. The literature on Marius de Zayas is quite extensive. Willard Bohn, “The Abstract Vision of Marius de Zayas,” Art Bulletin 62, no. 3 (September 1980), 434-452, deals



with de Zayas' art and his aesthetic relation to Picabia. Craig R. Bailey, "The Art of Marius de Zayas," Arts Magazine, 53, no.1, (September 1978), 136-44 is another broad survey that provides useful biographical information. De Zayas has been the subject of at least one comprehensive exhibition that also produced a catalogue: Douglas Hyland, Marius de Zayas: Conjurer of Souls (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, 1981). De Zayas' own memoir of these years, "How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York," intro. and notes by Francis M. Naumann, Arts Magazine 54, no. 8 (April 1980), 96-126, is made up mainly of reprinted reviews and is therefore somewhat disappointing. De Zayas' writings have not been thoroughly examined, but see Hull, "Camera Work," 133-40; Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 23-28; and Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 132-37. De Zayas has also been the subject of two M.A. theses: Leslie Cohen, "Marius de Zayas and the Modern Movement in New York," M.A. thesis, Queens College, CUNY, 1973; and Eva Epp Runk, "Marius de Zayas: The New York Years," M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1973.

46. Marius de Zayas, "The Sun Has Set," Camera Work 39 (July 1912), 19-20.

47. Ibid, 19

48. Ibid, 21. De Zayas' argument that modern art is the expression of spiritual exhaustion is similar to that made by certain more conservative critics. See Leo Stein, "Panic in Art," The New Republic, 7 November 1914, 20-21.

49. Bailey finds that de Zayas' "loose, inchoate positivism," was "based in part on Taine, Spencer, and possibly William James." Bailey, "Art of Marius de Zayas," 140. Criticism with claims to "scientific" objectivity was common in the period. See Arlene Olsen, Art Critics and the Avant-Garde, 1900-1913 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 4-7. De Zayas' theory of art is more complicated than I have been able to suggest here.

50. De Zayas' theory of art was essentially racist. Although he admired African art, he believed it to have been created by a people who "remain in a mental state very similar to that of the children of the white race." Marius de Zayas, African Negro Art and Its Influence on Modern Art (New York: Modern Gallery, 1916), 10.

51. Marius de Zayas, "The Evolution of Form - Introduction," Camera Work 41 (January 1913), 44-45.

52. Ibid, 47.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid, 44

55. Needless to say de Zayas' positivism was, in many respects, at odds with Stieglitz's lofty spiritual aims.

56. Marius de Zayas and Paul Haviland, A Study of the Modern Evolution of Plastic Expression (New York: "291," 1915), 10-11



57. Ibid, 11-12

58. See for example, quotation from Marin. Ibid, 14.

59. Ibid, 10.

60. Ibid, 17.

61. For a discussion of the caricatures and the accompanying essay see Bohn, "Abstract Vision," 435-46.

62. Marius de Zayas, "Preface," reprinted Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 20.

63. Ibid, 21

64. Ibid, 22

65. Ibid, 22

66. Reviewer Charles Caffin made this claim. Charles Caffin, New York American, 1913. Reprinted Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 52-53. For a more recent example of this opinion see Leavens, "291" to Zurich, 64-65.

67. Paul Haviland, "Marius de Zayas - Material, Relative, and Absolute" Camera Work 56 (April 1914, published October 1914), 33-34.

68. Picabia, "Preface," 19-20. See note 25.

69. Although the aesthetic theories developed by de Zayas and Picabia have many similarities they seem to have arrived at their conclusions separately. The rationale for the art of both men depended heavily on the old Symbolist theory of correspondance. Willard Bohn argues that both de Zayas' abstract caricature and Picabia's machine portraits make use of an intermediary object that symbolises the individual portrayed, and on which the work of art is based. Bohn believes that de Zayas influenced Picabia in this regard. Bohn, "Abstract Vision," 446-51. I think it likely that Picabia's example encouraged de Zayas to exhibit his caricatures, and to write his catalogue preface. See also, Camfield, Francis Picabia, 55-56.

70. Alfred Stieglitz to Sadakichi Hartmann, 18 February, 1913, Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Hereafter referred to as ASA.

71. Ibid.

72. On the aftermath of the Armory Show see Brown, Armory Show, 234-40, and Zilczer, "'World's Art Center,'" 2-7. Brown notes: "The public reacted to the Show with a display of interest rare in the annals of art history, a fact which is attributable to publicity and a spectacular presentation, but it is highly debatable whether the public was either profoundly moved or educated." On the decline at "291": Homer, Alfred



Stieglitz, 172-73. My account, while based, in its broad outlines, on accounts such Homer's, is more detailed, and attempts to place the writings in Camera Work into a pragmatic context. I also believe that Stieglitz did not, in fact, give up his efforts to maintain leadership in the New York avant-garde.

73. Alfred Stieglitz, [Preface], Camera Work Special Number (July 1914, published January 1915), 5. This issue will be discussed in greater detail below.

74. Henry McBride, review of Walkowitz exhibition, New York Sun, early 1914(?). Reprinted in Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 40.

75. Reprinted in Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 39-43; and Camera Work 45 (January 1914, published June 1914), 19-43. The Hartley exhibition seems to have caused somewhat greater consternation among reviewers.

76. On Frank Burty see reviews reprinted in Camera Work 45 (January 1914, published June 1914), 40-43.

77. Paul Haviland, "Exhibitions at '291,'" Camera Work 45 (January 1914, published June 1914), 19.

78. Ibid.

79. The March 1914 issue of Camera Work (No. 45) published tributes and other material on Keiley. See Lowe, Stieglitz, 177.

80. A very large number of letters from Katherine Rhoades to Alfred Stieglitz dating 1913-1917 are preserved in the ASA. I had hoped to discuss this correspondence more thoroughly in my thesis.

81. Hull, "Camera Work," 47-50.

82. On Greenwich Village connections see Abrahams, Lyrical Left, 165-66; Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 178-79; Lowe, Stieglitz, 177-78; and Tolnick, "Collecting," 49-50.

83. On art's new audience and American collectors: Abraham A. Davidson, "Some Early Exhibitions, Collectors, and Galleries," chap. in Early American Modernist Painting (New York: Harper and Row, 1981) 165-81; Tolnick, "Collecting," 43-58, and Zilczer, "'World's New Center,'" 2-7. Tolnick says of collector John Quinn that "Quinn was opposed absolutely to what he called the 'pseudo-Bohemianism' of downtown, that is, of other literary/political/artistic mixed company circles (Mabel Dodge's in particular) that emerged with his, but in Washington Square, and where dramatic debate and controversy were relished." Tolnick, 47. The audience for modern art in New York has not been adequately studied.

84. "Cubistic Watercolours and Drawings Attract Many Visitors to Carroll Galleries," New York Sun 20 December 1914. Quoted in Zilczer, "'World's New Center,'" 4.

85. George H. Douglas, The Smart Magazines (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1991), 9. According to Douglas "smart magazines" "had to make their pitch to the great



aspiring middle classes, or, at least the younger sons and daughters of the social elite, perhaps to some of their miscellaneous hangers-on -- free love poets, out of pocket artists, highly paid courtesans, and many other semi-cultured individuals loose in the metropolis." Douglas, 10-11. See also, Lewis A. Erensberg, Steppin Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.)

86. Well known art critic James Huneker wrote a column for the magazine in 1914 and 1914 entitled "The Seven Arts" that often dealt with modern art. While Puck, strictly speaking, was not a "smart magazine," in 1914 and 1915 the weekly seems to have taken aim at a more upscale audience. See Douglas, Smart Magazines, 41-42.

87. Participation by "291" associates with Puck magazine also constituted another attempt to sell "291" and its wares to the public. These efforts were not always consistent with the gallery's anti-commercial stance, nor with its pretensions to artistic seriousness. See also note 186.

88. Rodin: Puck, 10 October 1914, 20; Matisse: Puck 12 December 1914. The cartoon entitled "The Accidental Cubists" raises more questions that I can answer here. Published in Puck, 9 May 1914, back cover.

89. Walkowitz's drawings were accompanied by an essay by Benjamin de Casseras. Benjamin de Casseras, "The New Beauty," Puck 4 April 1915.

90. Puck 21 March 1914, 2.

91. Douglas, Smart Magazines, 99-101.

92. See note 83.

93. A thorough study of these dealers in art has not been made, but see: Zilczer, "World's New Center," 4-5. For a chronological list of art exhibitions in New York City see: Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 238-61. On Charles Daniel: Elizabeth McCausland, "The Daniel Gallery and Modern American Art," Magazine of Art 44, no.7 (November, 1951), 280-85.

94. Judith Zilczer, "Robert J. Coady, Forgotten Spokesman for Avant-Garde Culture in America," American Art Review 2, no. 6 (November-December, 1975): 77-89.

95. In April 1915, for example, Arthur B. Davies organised an exhibition for the Montross galleries that combined modern art and interior decoration. The exhibition, which featured work by Davies, William Glackens, Walt Kuhn, Maurice Prendergast, Charles Sheeler, and Henry Fitch Taylor, was, according to Judith Zilczer, "indicative of the popular application of the modern art ideal to interior design and fashion in the years after the Armory Show." It seems to have attracted considerable attention in New York City. Zilczer, "World's Art Center," 5.

96. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 27 May 1914, ASA.

97. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 9 June 1914, ASA.



98. Stieglitz could, however, be very kind to dealers, such as Charles Daniel, who came to him for advice. See Charles Daniel, "291," Camera Work Special Number (July 1914, published January 1915), 33. Daniel seems to have taken on work by several of Stieglitz's favorite American artists, including John Marin.

99. John Weichsel, "Cosmism and Amorphism," Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 79; John Weichsel, "Artists and Others," Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914), 15.

100. This "debate" is not discussed in the literature. Roger Piatt Hull notes "the frequency with which the breakdown of art was discussed in Camera Work," but he gives only a general overview of the various positions and fails to place them within the specific historical context. Hull, "Camera Work," 106-151. See also Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 131-40.

101. It should be noted that reservations about modern art had been expressed in Camera Work before. What I am trying to account for in this section is the revival of such arguments at a time when the gallery had identified itself quite closely with the most avant-garde tendencies. See for example, Sadakichi Hartmann, "On Originality," Camera Work 37 (January 1912), 19-21.

102. See especially Oscar Bluemner, "Walkowitz," Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 25-6, 37-8.

103. See the artists' statements in the catalogue for the Forum Exhibition, 1916. Reprints provided in Anne Harrell, The Forum Exhibition: Selections and Additions (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1983). Discussed in Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 170-72.

104. Picabia, "Preface," 20.

105. Samuel Swift, review of Picabia exhibition at "291," New York Sun, 1913. Reprinted in Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 48.

106. Charles Caffin, review of de Zayas exhibition at "291," Reprinted in Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 53.

107. Ibid.

108. Hyland, Conjurer, 39-39.

109. The issue was dated April-July 1913 but did not appear until November 1913.

110. Marius de Zayas, "Photography and Artistic Photography," Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 13-14. Because of limitations of space I will not discuss de Zayas' theory of photography.

111. The article was one of the longest ever published in Camera Work.



112. The literature on Weichsel is limited. For an overview of his writings see Hull, “Camera Work,” 140-45. There is a short biographical note in Green, Camera Work, 342-43.

113. Victor Meric, “Vers Amorphism,” Camera Work Special Number (June 1913), 57. The “manifesto” was originally published in Les Hommes du Jour 276 (May 1913), 8-10. It may have sent to New York by Picabia. See Leavens, ‘291’ to Zurich, 73-77.

114. Weichsel, “Cosmism,” 70

115. Ibid, 71.

116. Ibid. 69-70.

117. Ibid, 82. By “racial” Weichsel appears to have meant “human racial.” There is nothing in his essays to suggest that his was another racist theory of art.

118. Quoted ibid, 72. Buffet, “Modern Art,” 11; Aisen, “Latest Evolution,” 16.

119. Weichsel, “Cosmism,” 78.

120. Ibid, 78-79.

121. I would surmise that Weichsel also asked very little in the way of pecuniary compensation for his essays.

122. John Weichsel to Alfred Stieglitz, 24 August 1913, ASA. Quoted in Leavens, ‘291’ to Zurich, 77-78. Stieglitz’s enthusiasm for Weichsel’s piece is somewhat surprising given the poor quality of Weichsel’s prose.

123. Alfred Stieglitz to John Weichsel, 26 August 1913, John Weichsel Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. Quoted in Leavens, ‘291’ to Zurich, 78.

124. See Bluemner, “Audiator,” 26-27.

125. McBride, review of Walkowitz exhibition, 39.

126. At the same time, of course, de Zayas and other “291”ers were also working for Puck magazine. Stieglitz and his associates appear not to have been entirely consistent in their promotional efforts, and attempted to appeal to a variety of audiences by a variety of means.

127. This was, of course, “291”’s self-proclaimed mission.

128. Most notably the Daniel, Bourgeois, and Carroll Galleries. Montross had also began showing modern art. See Zilczer, “Aesthetic Struggle,” 245-47.

129. John Weichsel, “The Rampant Zeitgeist,” Camera Work 44 (October 1913,



published March 1914), 23.

130. *Ibid*, 23-24.

131. *Ibid*, 20.

132. Bluemner, "Walkowitz," 25.

133. *Ibid*, 38.

134. *Ibid*, 25.

135. De Zayas even showed some of Walkowitz's work to Picasso in the summer of 1914. Picasso seems not to have been very impressed. See Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 11 July 1914, ASA.

136. Weichsel grouped Walkowitz with the other extremists in "Cosmism and Amorphism." Weichsel, "Cosmism," 78.

137. Paul Haviland, "Photo-Secession Notes," Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 39.

138. Reprinted in Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 39-43. The favorable reviews were by persons with connections to "291."

139. Marius de Zayas, "Modern Art - Theories and Representations," Camera Work 44 (October 1913, published March 1914), 14.

140. See notes 105 and 106 above.

141. De Zayas, "Modern Art," 16.

142. *Ibid*, 19.

143. *Ibid*, 16-18.

144. *Ibid*, 18.

145. John Weichsel, "Artists and Others," Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914). This article will be discussed below.

146. Loy's work had been introduced to the Stieglitz circle by Mabel Dodge. Steven Watson, Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 94.

147. Mina Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism," Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914), 14-15.

148. Although it has been noted in the literature that the "What '291' means to me" issue was intended to bring "291" out of its slump, a comprehensive discussion of the



volume does not exist. The contribution by Eduard Steichen has received somewhat greater attention. See Lowe, Stieglitz, 181-82, 184, 189-193; Rodgers, "False Memories," 62.

149. Alfred Stieglitz, ["Preface"], Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 3.

150. *Ibid.*

151. *Ibid.*, 4.

152. Arthur Hoeber, "What 291 Means to Me," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 49.

153. See for example: Stephen Haweis, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 26-27.

154. "Contributors," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 6.

155. Hutchins Hapgood, "What 291 Is to Me," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 11.

156. "Oasis": Frank Pease, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 25; "home": Helen W. Henderson, no title "church," *ibid.*, 46; "clinic": Dallett Fuguet, "291," *ibid.*, 63.

157. John W. Breyfogle, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 38; Paul Haviland, "What 291 Means to Me," *ibid.*, 32.

158. See for example: Anne Brigman, "What 291 Means to Me," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 17-20; Ernest Haskell, "291," *ibid.*, 47-48.

159. Oscar Bluemner, "Observations in Black and White," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 51.

160. *Ibid.*, 53.

161. For example: Haviland, "Means to Me," 32; E, Zoler, "291 -," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 41.

162. "Contributors," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 6.

163. Helen R. Gibbs, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 34.

164. Barbara Butler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916-1929 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 20; Borras, Picabia, 154.

165. William Zorach, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915),



38; Clifford Williams, "A Letter," *ibid*, 59.

166. Man Ray, "Impressions of 291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 61; Fuguet, "291," 63. That "291" was "labour" was another time-worn cliche concerning the gallery. See, for example, the portrait of Stieglitz by Marius de Zayas entitled "L'Accoucheur d'idées." Published in Camera Work 39 (July 1912), 51 [Fig. 14]. Christine Battersby notes that "as the nineteenth century drew on...the metaphors of male motherhood became commonplace - as did those of male midwifery. The artist conceived, was pregnant, laboured (in sweat and pain), was delivered, and (in an uncontrolled ecstasy of agonised - male - control) brought forth." Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1989), 73. She notes this tendency was part of a wider male appropriation of desirable "feminine" characteristics.

167. Ward Muir, "Two-Nine-One - A Londoner's View," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 22-23.

168. Paul Haviland, "Means to Me," 31.

169. *Ibid*, 32.

170. Marius de Zayas, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 73.

171. *Ibid*.

172. *Ibid*.

173. *Ibid*.

174. The disagreement between Stieglitz and Steichen is discussed by Lowe, Stieglitz, 183-93.

175. Eduard Steichen, "291," Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 65.

176. *Ibid*, 65-66.

177. *Ibid*, 66.

178. *Ibid*.

179. Arthur Hoeber, review of Rhoades-Beckett exhibition, New York Globe, 1915. Reprinted in Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 18. The issue was also reviewed in Guido Bruno's bohemian magazine, Greenwich Village 1, no. 3 (February?, 1915). See Alfred Stieglitz to Guido Bruno, 25 February 25, Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Henry McBride mentions it briefly in a review from February or March, 1915. Henry McBride, review of Marin exhibition, New York Sun. Reprinted in Camera Work, 48 (October 1916), 21.



180. Merz, "Zu 291," 39.

181. Haskell, "291," 48.

182. In 1915 Stieglitz even signed personal letters as "291." See for example, Alfred Stieglitz to Agnes Meyer, 23 June 1915, Agnes Meyer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Hereafter referred to as AMP.

183. Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Photocopies of some of the documents in the De Zayas Papers, Seville, Spain, make up the Marius de Zayas Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York. I have examined only the photocopies.

184. The best account of de Zayas' European trip is in Willard Bohn, Apollinaire and the Faceless Man (London: Associated University Press, 1991), 41-47. Bohn does not enter into the subject of transatlantic perceptions and misperceptions. See also Willard Bohn, "Guillaume Apollinaire and the New York Avant-Garde," Comparative Literature Studies 8, no. 1 (March 1976), 40-51; and Camfield, Picabia, 67-68.

185. De Zayas' sojourn can be dated from: Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 22 May 1914, and de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 13 September 1914. Both ASA.

186. On June 30, 1914 De Zayas wrote to Stieglitz that he was sending some material to Puck, but not "the real stuff, for that does not interest them nor the readers of Puck. That I will reserve for us." Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 30 June 1914, ASA. See also: "A Notable Series of Caricatures," Puck 17 October 1914, 3.

187. William Camfield believes that de Zayas travelled to Europe with a program of exhibitions for "291" already in mind. Camfield, Picabia, 67-70. I think it is more probable that de Zayas, while he had some idea of what he wanted, finalised his plans as he acquired the works for display.

188. Agnes Meyer, in a letter to Stieglitz, noted "how much more [de Zayas] is in a European setting." Agnes Meyer to Alfred Stieglitz, 25 June 1914, ASA. In later life de Zayas settled in France.

189. See Guillaume Apollinaire, The Cubist Painters, trans. Lionel Abel (New York: George Wittenborn, 1970), 17-18. Originally published in 1913. Virginia Spate, Orphism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 71-81.

190. On Simultanism, see Apollinaire's own definition in the polemical article "Simultanisme-Librettisme." Les Soirées de Paris (June 1914), 323-25. Also: Gabriel Abouin, "Devant l'Idéogramme d'Apollinaire," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 383-85. "Simultaneity," was, of course, a word widely used to describe artistic and literary attempts to embody the totality of a changing experience. See Spate, Orphism, 19-2; 309-18, Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years, rev. ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 309-18, 331-52; also Marjorie Perloff, The Futurist Moment: Avant-garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 2-41. On the calligrammes: S. I. Lockerbie, "Introduction," to Guillaume Apollinaire, Calligrammes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1-20;



Willard Bohn, The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9-24, 46-84; Margaret Davies, Apollinaire (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), 240-43. Apollinaire as 'impresario' of the avant-garde: Shattuck, Banquet Years, 253-97.

191. "M. de Zayas, who has renewed the art of caricature with extraordinary talent and who introduced Picasso and Picabia to America...is presently in Paris. He intends to make caricatures of the most advanced individuals in the arts, in literature, and in music." Guillaume Apollinaire, "En Amérique," Paris-Journal 24 May 1914. Quoted and translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 43.

192. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Marius de Zayas," Paris-Journal 8 July 1914. Translated and reprinted in Guillaume Apollinaire, Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews, 1902-18, ed. Le Roy Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 419. See also: Guillaume Apollinaire, "Marius de Zayas," Paris-Journal, 19 July 1914.

193. Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 378, 396, 398, 416.

194. Bohn, Faceless Man, 53-55. This pantomime will be discussed in somewhat greater detail in the following chapter.

195. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, May 26/27 1914, ASA.

196. Ibid. The member of the Apollinaire circle with whom de Zayas seems to have had the most contact, outside of Apollinaire himself, was the pianist and composer Alberto Savinio. Savinio was painter Giorgio di Chirico's brother.

197. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 9 June 1914, ASA.

198. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 1 July 1914, ASA.

199. Ibid.

200. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 9 July 1914, ASA.

201. Ibid.

202. See especially Futurist manifestos that advocated the use of mathematical equations in art, or that valorised the methods of science: F. T. Marinetti, "Destruction of Syntax - Imagination Without Strings - Words-In-Freedom," in Futurist Manifestos, ed. Umbro Apollonio (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 104; Bruno Corradini and Emilio Settimelli, "Weights, Measures and Price of Artistic Genius - Futurist Manifesto," in Futurist Manifestos, ed. Umbro Apollonio (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 135-50. De Zayas, however, was probably not influenced by the Futurists in the production of the abstract caricatures. Apollinaire himself had rather mixed feeling about the Futurists. His simultanism was influenced by Futurist experiments, and he even wrote a poem that incorporated mathematical signs, but in general he believed that Futurist work remained too descriptive. See Bohn, Visual Poetry, 15-17; Guillaume Apollinaire, "Nos amis les Futuristes," Les Soirées de Paris (January 1914), 78-79.



203. A fascination with things American is particularly evident in interviews given by French artists during visits to the United states: Picabia, "How I See New York," and other interviews; "French Artists Spur on an American Art," New York Tribune, 24 October 1915, sec. 4, 2.

204. O.-W. Gamedoo, "Notes Anglais," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 365-69; F. S. Flint, "Imagistes," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 372-83.

205. Maurice Reynal, "Chronique cinématographique," Les Soirées de Paris (May 1914), 249-50; "Chronique cinématographique," Les Soirées de Paris (February 1914), 80-83.

206. Alan Seger, "Le Baseball aux Etats-Unis," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 451. Boxers: Maurice Reynal "Le Boxeur et son ombre," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 434-45.

207. Harrison Reeves, "Les Epopées populaires l'Américaines," Les Soirées de Paris (March 1914), 164-171.

208. In 1916-17, Robert Coady, the owner of the Washington Square Gallery, published a Nick Carter novel as authentic American literature in his magazine, The Soil.

209. Reeves, "Epopées," 167.

210. Ibid, 171. Apollinaire was also an admirer of Walt Whitman.

211. This is, in fact, a quite typical example of "othering." Andreas Huyssen notes that "Americanism" was more a phenomenon of the 1920s. Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modelska (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 188-207; also, Lisa M. Steinman, Made in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 39-40.

212. This was particularly true of the controversy over the origins and application of the term "Simultanism" itself. See Apollinaire, "Simultanisme-Librettisme," 323-25; and Apollinaire, "Nos amis les Futurists," 78-79. "Impresario" is Roger Shattuck's term for Apollinaire. See Shattuck, Banquet Years, 253-97.

213. The rough American, John Gould Fletcher was favoured over the effete Englishman, Arthur Symons in: H. H., "Notes Anglais," Les Soirées de Paris (February 1914), 80-83; O.-W. Gamedoo in an article on the Imagists found it necessary to point out that this school made use of "beaucoup d'idées depuis longtemps familières à Paris." O.-W. Gamedoo, "Notes Anglaises," Les Soirées de Paris (July 1914), 366.

214. La Vie Parisienne, 3 May 1913, 309. Quoted in Camfield, Picabia, 57.

215. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Pour le Salon d'Automne," Paris-Journal, 25 July 1914.



Quoted and translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 53-54.

216. "While I was waiting for [July] 25 I nearly accompanied Picabia and Zayas to Etival where they were going to prepare the scenery at Picabia's place. For the pantomime was to be performed in New York in January, and I would have been there too. We envisioned a great success. The expenses were to be paid by Stieglitz who would easily have advanced the necessary sum due to the curiosity our names would have aroused in Manhattan on the Hudson." Guillaume Apollinaire, Souvenirs de la Grande Guerre, ed. Pierre Caizergues, (Montpelier: Fata Morgana, 1980), 17. Quoted and translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 54-55.

217. On the planned Apollinaire exhibition see: Guillaume Apollinaire to Lou de Coligny, 21 April 1915, in Guillaume Apollinaire, Lettres à Lou (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). De Zayas and the self-styled American Futurist, Andre Tridon were the backers of the proposed concert by Savinio. See Bohn, Faceless Man, 135. An example of Savinio's music was also published in 291, No. 2.

218. See note 96, above.

219. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 30 June 1914, ASA.

220. Ibid.

221. Les Soirées de Paris, one of the most important magazines of the Parisian avant-garde, suspended publication when Apollinaire joined the army. Kahnweiler's gallery was also shut down by the French authorities because of his German nationality, probably to de Zayas' great satisfaction.

222. De Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 109.

223. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 13 September 1914, ASA. The bracketed question mark at the end of the sentence is de Zayas', and seems intended to ask whether the "civilised" races were, in fact, still civilised now that the war had begun.

224. Ibid.

225. These exhibitions will be discussed in chapter two.

226. Katherine Rhoades, "Beyond the Wind," 17; Rhoades, "Vision," 18; Mina Loy, "There is No Life or Death," 18; S. S. S., "And They Met," 50. All in Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914). Literary work by Gertrude Stein had made up a substantial part of the August 1912 Matisse-Picasso-Stein Special Issue.

227. The poem by S. S. S. is about a newly married couple. He goes out to work and "his work was play," while "she stayed where she was, to play, - / And her play was work, for she was waiting." Eventually, the woman dies from loneliness and boredom. Women's search for a place in a male dominated world will be an important theme of women's writings in 291 magazine. S. S. S., "And They Met," 50.

228. Weichsel, "Artists and Others," 13.



229. Ibid, 16.

230. Ibid.

231. The abstract caricatures reproduced were: "Alfred Stieglitz," "Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Jr.," "Two Friends" (probably of Meyer and Picabia), "Theodore Roosevelt," "Paul B. Haviland," and "Francis Picabia."

232. The odd man out was Theodore Roosevelt. De Zayas despised Roosevelt because he had attacked the art exhibited in the Armory Show and because as president he had supported the rule of Mexican dictator Diaz. See Hyland, Conjurer, 112.

233. Ideas in Haviland's essay are similar to ones de Zayas himself expressed elsewhere, suggesting that the essay was a collaborative effort.

234. Paul Haviland, "Marius de Zayas - Material, Relative, and Absolute Caricatures," Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914), 34.

235. Ibid. Originally from: De Zayas and Haviland, Modern Evolution, 27-28.

236. Haviland, "Marius de Zayas," 34.

237. Ibid.

238. This will be discussed in somewhat greater detail in chapter two. See notes to chapter two, no. 65.

239. One of the last pieces in the issue is a prescient essay by Horace Traubel, reprinted from The Conservator (July, 1914), in which Traubel declares himself tired of hearing the assertion that photographs are not art. During the course of his argument that they are art, Traubel elides the distinction between man and machine: "You edge up and ask me whether I'm aware that the camera's a machine. Certainly. And I'm also aware that Stieglitz is another machine. And I'm a machine. But Stieglitz is also a man....And when I look at these pictures I think that the machine is also somehow a man. And in the beauty of what I'm admiring and loving, I can't tell where the machine in either case stops and where the man begins." The article seem to foreshadow Picabia's "machine-portraits" later published in 291, which similarly mediate between art and non-art. Horace Traubel, "Horace Traubel on Photography," Camera Work 46 (April 1914, published October 1914), 49-50.



## **Chapter Two**



## **291 Magazine**

291 magazine, published by members of the Stieglitz circle between March 1915 and March 1916, has been misunderstood in the literature. Frequently, the magazine has been regarded as little more than an American effort to produce an avant-garde journal based on European models such as Apollinaire's calligrammes and futurist typography.<sup>1</sup> Others have considered the magazine to be part of the history of Dada, or as prefiguring certain aspects of that movement. In this interpretation, emphasis is usually placed on Picabia's "object portraits," published in 291 Nos. 5/6 (July/August 1915) to the exclusion of other work that appeared in the magazine.<sup>2</sup> 291 is often also discussed with reference to American art and is seen to have influenced the development of a uniquely American modernism based on the city and the machine.<sup>3</sup> Although each of these interpretations contains elements of truth, they are incomplete and misleading when taken in isolation. These readings usually look at 291 from the perspective of a particular artistic movement, such as Dada or "Simultanism," that has points in common with the magazine but is at some distance from it aesthetically and intellectually.<sup>4</sup> Most of the existing interpretations, moreover, are lacking in detail and do not place 291 within a specific historical or geographical situation. While, for example, works by the Apollinaire circle, and American art that resembled it, appeared in the magazine, this material was published with only a partial understanding of the original movement on the part of the editors, and with a different intent.

Stieglitz's own account of the magazine's production and those provided by other members of the "291" circle are also not very reliable and usually reflect an individual's personal interpretation of past events. Remarkably little supporting material, such as letters and other documents that could help to explain the editors' motives, is in existence, suggesting that editorial decisions were most often discussed



verbally by the “291” group.<sup>5</sup> Agnes Meyer who, next to de Zayas, was probably the person most responsible for the magazine’s publication, remarked in a letter to Charles Freer written on March 4, 1915, that

a few weeks ago some of the ‘291’ crowd had the idea of getting out a monthly leaflet setting forth our view of art, life or any other thing we might care to discuss....Of course we get no end of fun out of it and the thing will be worth while if only as a self developer.<sup>6</sup>

While Meyer’s note, written before the first number had even appeared, implies that the magazine was little more than a trifle, the short article on 291 published in the October 1916 issue of Camera Work, probably written by de Zayas and Stieglitz, limited itself to remarks concerning the magazine’s importance as formal innovation:

‘291’ is always experimenting. During 1915-16, amongst other experiments, was a series with typesetting and printing. The experiments were based on work which had been done with type and printers’ ink, and paper, by Apollinaire in Paris, and by the Futurists in Italy....The new typography already has a name: ‘Psychotype’ ....<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Stieglitz’s account of the “291”’s origins, which appears in “Conversations” probably recorded in the 1930s, is the most complete. “De Zayas, Haviland and Agnes Meyer,” he recounted, “felt that the war had put a damper on everything.”

They believed we should publish a monthly dedicated to the most modern art and satire. I always had hoped there would be a magazine in the United States devoted to true satire, a form of expression sadly ignored here.<sup>8</sup>

The two further said that 291 must get some life into it. Perhaps in this way something might happen. I did not quite understand what was meant but my understanding was immaterial. The interesting thing was there was a desire to be put into action.<sup>9</sup>

According to Stieglitz, the objectives of 291 were many, and included the intention of revealing “how the game of art and its business was played,” an aspect of the magazine later toned down on the advice of Eugene Meyer.<sup>10</sup> Another important aim was to provide an outlet for work by artists and writers of the “291” circle, including its women members, Agnes Meyer and Katherine Rhoades.<sup>11</sup>



While these points are all valid, Stieglitz's recollections are still probably misleading in some respects. Especially hard to credit is his claim that the magazine was put together on an entirely ad hoc basis:

Mrs. Meyer asked how we were to determine what should be published. What was our policy to be? Was the majority to rule?...Since we were four, I inquired what would happen in case of a tie. Since 291 was being founded on a new idea, why think in terms of obsolete methods? If any one of us considered something worthy of publication, that should be sufficient reason to incorporate it....Meetings, minutes and endless discussion were anti-291. Agnes Meyer felt elated by my approach.<sup>12</sup>

Despite Stieglitz's disclaimer, there is, in fact, an unmistakable plan to many of the issues published, though consistency from one number to the next is often more precarious. Even when the twelve issues of the magazine are looked at as a whole, however, some coherent patterns emerge. 291 exhibited a continuing interest in certain key areas of concern, including the "business" of art and the art public, the meaning and relevance of modern art for contemporary life, and the urban environment in which it was often produced. There is, moreover, a distinctive tone to much of the art and literature published in 291, one decidedly more aggressive and opinionated than that usually taken by Camera Work. A letter written by Marius de Zayas to Agnes Meyer on July 15, 1915, after four issues of the magazine had already been published, is perhaps more helpful in explaining the editors' motives. De Zayas wrote that, with 291 magazine, he, Meyer and Haviland had

...brought 291...from the beautiful realm of the metaphysical to a field of practical action. 291 as a group has taken a very decided personality. We have begun to form the inside instead of remaining only a receptive place, which had for a business to test the soul of others.<sup>13</sup>

De Zayas' note suggests that the magazine had quite a definite purpose, and that it was part of a larger plan that the editors had for "291." The letter confirms, above all, that 291 was a further attempt to bring the gallery out of the state of inactivity and aimlessness into which it seemed to have fallen in 1914 and that had already been the impetus for the "What '291' means to me" issue of Camera Work. I would argue that 291 should be considered, at least at one level, as yet another effort to provide the



gallery with a more distinct identity and thus involve it more directly in the affairs of the New York and international art worlds.<sup>14</sup> Most specifically, despite Stieglitz's assertion that 291 aspired to show how the "game of art...was played," the magazine seems, in fact, itself to have been very much a "business" venture initiated with the objective of selling "291" to the public. By means of a greater engagement with the practical affairs of the art world and by the promotion of the radical art that de Zayas had discovered in Europe during the summer of 1914, the editors hoped that they might be able to make of "291" a more important centre for modern activity not only in New York but, with the decline of the Parisian avant-garde, on an international scale as well. Because the magazine involved the gallery more deeply in the business of art, its publication was not entirely consistent with Stieglitz's self-proclaimed anti-commercial beliefs.<sup>15</sup> The magazine should probably be seen as something of a rebellion by the younger generation at "291," represented by de Zayas and Meyer, against the authority and methods of Stieglitz, a revolt that eventually led to the founding of the Modern Gallery as the "commercial" branch of "291" in October of 1915.

Although 291 was published primarily with the intention of turning "291"'s face more to the world, the magazine seems also to have been produced very much for the benefit of gallery insiders themselves. As Meyer noted in her letter to Freer, 291, especially in its earlier issues, was very much a "self developer" for the individuals involved.<sup>16</sup> As such, it had the effect of providing the group and its activities with a coherence that allowed members to work with greater confidence for the future. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in the pages of the magazine one frequently encounters discussions of "291"'s own identity and that there is even a self-reflexive character to contents that, on the surface, are not directly related to the gallery's affairs. The magazine's ongoing interest in the creative act and in the art public seems most particularly to have a bearing on the aspirations of the "291" group itself.<sup>17</sup>



The first issue of 291, which appeared in March of 1915, was published at a time when “291”’s problems, already the object of so much attention on the part of gallery insiders, seemed especially persistent. For Stieglitz, the winter of 1914-15 was marked by personal differences with some of the “closer associates,” most especially Katherine Rhoades, and his days at the gallery were ones of constant tension.<sup>18</sup> The continuing war in Europe also weighed heavily on Stieglitz’s mind, and seems to have affected his outlook on “291” and art in America. In a letter to Gabrielle Buffet written on December 30, 1914, he stated that, despite what Europeans might have heard, there was, in fact, no marked American interest in modern art:

...there is no enthusiasm, there seems to be no life, the people seem not to know where they are at, and most of them, men and women, walk about half dazed. They seem to have no interest in anything. Of course this is more or less a neurasthenic condition. But it is a serious condition nonetheless....Even those who could afford it feel ashamed to think of buying pictures, with so many people starving in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

He also wondered whether “in times like these I have a right to keep a thing like ‘291’ going, or to run a publication like Camera Work.<sup>20</sup>”

Stieglitz’s lamentations notwithstanding, there is, in fact, considerable evidence to suggest that the market for modern art in New York was not nearly as depressed as he made out. In his memoir of this period, admittedly written many years later, de Zayas proclaimed 1915 to have been the best year ever for modern art activity in the city and described at some length the many exhibitions in which it was shown.<sup>21</sup> Lists compiled by art historian Judith Zilczer confirm that owners of “commercial” galleries in New York continued to be sufficiently optimistic about the art market to stage quite a large number of shows featuring modern work.<sup>22</sup> Examination of Camera Work indicates, moreover, that members of the “291” circle were very much aware of this activity, and felt keenly the competition from other galleries. A defensiveness is evident



in the “notes” on this period in the magazine, which found it necessary to point out that the works in the Picabia show had “never before been exhibited anywhere and that the display of African art at “291” “was the first time in the history of exhibitions, either in this country or elsewhere, that Negro statuary was shown solely from the point of view of art.”<sup>23</sup> The reviews reprinted in Camera Work made, moreover, frequent mention of the gallery’s competitors. Most revealing in this regard, perhaps, is a review by Henry McBride of the Children’s Art show at “291,” which also included a section on the large exhibition of American “cubists” organised by Armory Show alumnus Arthur Davies for Montross in March and April of 1915.<sup>24</sup> McBride’s comments help to clarify the situation in the art world during the early part of that year and to explain “291”’s place within it. “Cubism,” it appears, is still causing quite a sensation in the city:

Cubism is in the air. Musicians feel it, poets express it; the dancers reflect it, as you will see when the Ballet Russe comes to town; and businessmen make considerable money out of it.<sup>25</sup>

McBride also noted that

Mr. Davies’ aggregation of modernists now performing in three of Mr. Montross’ rectangular galleries have by no means a monopoly on cubes. There are many others in this borough who do it too. Four other galleries in town at this moment are given over to the moderns....<sup>26</sup>

Apparently, however,

there is a very evident and widely felt impulse to drape the full responsibility for the cubistic movement upon the shoulders of Arthur B. Davies. This is highly complimentary to Mr. Davies, but not at all considerate of the feelings of Alfred Stieglitz.<sup>27</sup>

Most telling, perhaps, is McBride’s observation that

...Mr. Davies’ crowd have the faculty of arousing more philistine ire than the others. This does not prove them better, but it does prove them better propagandists for the cause.<sup>28</sup>

Comments such as these must have caused considerable distress at “291” in 1915, and also suggest that Stieglitz was wrong in his assessment of the New York art market. It



seems likely that it was only “291” and its art, sold by Stieglitz’s methods, that were not doing well. Stieglitz’s associate, Marius de Zayas, seems to have read the situation somewhat differently. Throughout 1915 he was in ongoing contact with artists and dealers in Europe and, by the summer of that year, was convinced that a “commercial” branch of “291” would be able to support itself.

Exhibitions at “291” during the first half of the 1914-15 season were made up of the work that de Zayas had brought back from France in September, and were probably put together largely under his direction. These exhibitions, as has already been noted, were the most serious and demanding presented by “291” since the spring of 1913 and appear to have been organised partly in the hope of reestablishing the gallery’s reputation as the leading centre of modern activity in New York.<sup>29</sup> Appropriately, de Zayas’ exhibits placed the work on display into the context of the theory of art that he had recently set out in essays for Camera Work. They were thus the result of a considerable amount of research and reflection, and constituted a monument to the modern movement that was hard to ignore. Moreover, while the work exhibited was difficult, the educational format also had the effect of rendering it somewhat less forbidding to people unfamiliar with modern art. The first of these shows, on view between November 3 and 27, 1914, was made up of African sculpture, and thus illustrated the sources of modern “form” in the art of “primitive” peoples. The “291” galleries were specially decorated for the occasion by Eduard Steichen in black and orange patterns.<sup>30</sup> The second exhibition, on the walls from December 9, 1914 through January 11, 1915, showed the recent work by Picasso and Braque that de Zayas had obtained from Picabia. This was the art of the modern masters of the investigative art of form, created on the bases of the African model.<sup>31</sup> The third and last of the exhibitions organised by de Zayas comprised the four large canvases that Picabia had completed in 1914 and which seem to have been intended by him as a summation of his abstract period [Fig. 16: “Je revois en souvenir ma chère



Udnie”]<sup>32</sup> These bold and aggressive works by the artist who, in his investigations, had cut the remaining ties with subject matter, represented the very latest tendency in modern painting.<sup>33</sup> A note on these exhibitions from the October 1916 Camera Work suggests that they held considerable importance for “291” insiders and were viewed as something of an abstract of the gallery’s “discoveries” to date. The Picabia exhibition had, the reader was informed,

brought to a close the definite series of experiments begun at ‘291’ some years ago. And the underlying idea of this series was summed up in the exhibitions of Negro Art, Picasso-Braque, closing with Picabia.<sup>34</sup>

These exhibitions can also be regarded as constituting yet another reply on the part of de Zayas to John Weichsel and the other aesthetic conservatives at “291.” They implied, by means of their historical programme, that abstraction was not an aberration, but the logically necessary outcome of the history of art.

Whatever the merits of these shows, they seem, unfortunately, to have been taken by critics as just another set of additions to the many exhibitions of modern art already on view in New York City, and did not succeed in their appointed task of increasing “291”’s prestige in the art world. Some reviewers were duly shocked by the art displayed, a reaction that, in so far as it contributed to the gallery’s notoriety, was certainly not unwelcome. E. G. Forbes Watson of the New York Evening Post, for example, found the African art show to be a veritable heart of darkness on Fifth Avenue, “so powerfully expressive of gross brutality that the flesh quails.”<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Luther Carey wrote in the New York Times that the Picabia exhibition, “logically following that of Picasso last month,” was made up of “most unpleasant arrangements of strangely sinister abstract forms that convey the sense of evil without direct statement.”<sup>36</sup> On the whole, however, reviews of the 1914-15 season at “291,” which were duly reprinted in Camera Work, make for rather dull reading. Many critics were appreciative of “291”’s efforts, and dutifully passed on information from de Zayas and



Stieglitz, or provided their own, rather pedestrian, interpretations of the art shown.<sup>37</sup> Few of their reviews, however, communicated a sense of excitement, or indicated that something “new” had been said. The unspoken consensus seems to have been that “291,” despite its best efforts, had failed to stand out from the crowd.

Following the Picabia exhibition, eclecticism returned to “291.” Realist-oriented work by Katherine Rhoades and Marion Beckett was exhibited in February, to be followed by a large John Marin retrospective and a show of children’s art, the third such event at the gallery. By the spring of 1915, however, Marius de Zayas, Agnes Meyer and Paul Haviland were hard at work on 291 magazine, a project that, in many respects, took up where de Zayas’ three exhibitions had left off. 291, in common with these shows, published and publicised absolutely the latest in art from Europe, most notably the “Simultanism” of the Apollinaire circle. Apollinaire had, in fact, recently argued that Simultanism was superseding and incorporating abstraction in the efforts to convey modern consciousness, and 291 magazine could thus be seen as taking the gallery a step further in the historical series that the exhibitions had begun.<sup>38</sup> The first issue of the magazine, which appeared late in March, had very much the air of a manifesto, and indicated, by means of statement and example, the directions in which the editors intended to take 291 and “291.” Much of the material published was, in fact, self-referential in the manner of the “Means to Me” instalment of Camera Work, but in this case its purpose was to show that introspection and self-doubt were a thing of the past at “291” and that in future the gallery would be more aggressive in its dealings with the outside world. De Zayas’ cover illustration, a cubified caricature of Stieglitz accompanied by the inscription, “291 throws back its forelock,” set the new, more brazen, tone [Fig. 17].<sup>39</sup>

291 No. 1 opened with a long essay on art criticism by Agnes Meyer that, in its assertive tone, formed a contrast to the more restrained writing characteristic of Camera



Work.<sup>40</sup> Entitled “How Versus Why,” the essay was a heated condemnation of the criticism Meyer abhorred, and a forthright explanation of that which she admired. Meyer was not afraid to name names in her article, and signalled out James Huneker, a New York critic quite in sympathy with modern tendencies, to bear the brunt of her attack on what she called “emotional” criticism.<sup>41</sup> Writing such as Huneker’s, which, she argued, dealt more with the critic’s own personality than with the art under consideration, was rejected in favour of commentary that followed the “scientific” lead set by modern art itself:

#### ART HAS ALWAYS PROGRESSED AS THOUGHT HAS

PROGRESSED the most revolutionary changes having taken place within the last fifty years as a natural pace-keeping with the tremendous development of thought. But American criticism has again demonstrated that our best brains are devoted to production and not to pure thought for criticism in its methods has lagged lamentably behind the product it presumes to estimate. The scientific influence has at last invaded the field of art but its critics still wander blissfully in the land of romance.<sup>42</sup>

The criticism Meyer endorsed was one that would eschew subjective considerations and quests for “the unknowable,” to emulate science in its practical and hard-headed approach.<sup>43</sup> Criticism, she maintained, should examine art from two main points of view:

Under the first aspect we must determine what the artist wishes to express and how adequately he succeeds in that expression; under the second aspect we must decide upon the value of that expression as an addition to what has already been said.<sup>44</sup>

Meyer claimed that “291” had, in fact, been engaged in just this kind of activity for years:

‘291’ realizing that conditions were changing and that the element of reason was assuming as important, if not more important a role than the emotional element, has resolutely devoted its energy to explaining the ‘HOW’ of art, content to let the romanticists continue their vague struggle as long as the battle with windmills and the EXPLANATION OF THEIR OWN PERSONALITIES might amuse them.<sup>45</sup>

In preparation of the article, Meyer seems to have been greatly influenced by de Zayas’



theories of art, or may have expressed opinions that the group held in common. De Zayas' concerns that art be relevant, that it deal with the facts ("form") in a "scientific" manner, and that it not dabble in idle speculation ("metaphysics") were here applied to art criticism.<sup>46</sup>

Although the opinions expressed in "How Versus Why" were probably sincerely held, and were consistent with aspects of de Zayas' aesthetic theory, the true intent of Meyer's article is, however, hard to determine. Despite the cogency of the arguments presented and the vehemence of the language used, examples of criticism that followed Meyer's prescriptions did not, in fact, appear in subsequent issues of 291, although "scientific" looking art was there in abundance. Meyer's assertion that "291" had been engaged in this kind of critical activity all along was, moreover, plainly preposterous. Although Stieglitz claimed that the gallery was a place where "investigations" were conducted, he seldom limited himself only to observations about what an artist had or had not accomplished and, moreover, explicitly advocated a "personal" response to the art on view. Stieglitz's magazine, Camera Work, was also replete with just the kind of "emotional" responses to art that Meyer deplored. In light of these contradictions, I would suggest that "How Versus Why" is best read, not literally, but as a more general statement of intent addressed to "291"'s audience. The article's pragmatic approach to the specific issue of art criticism suggested, more broadly that, in future, the gallery would not let itself be sidetracked by mere personal whims or vague spiritual urges, but would "stick to the business at hand" and aim to "accomplish well defined tasks."<sup>47</sup> The repudiation of an emotional response to art also had the effect of distancing the editors of 291 from Stieglitz and Camera Work, and thus from the lassitude that seemed to infect the gallery in 1914. Finally, through its rejection of most current criticism, "How Versus Why" indicated that, henceforth, "291" would, by means of the new magazine, maintain a relationship with its audience that circumvented intermediaries interested only in themselves.<sup>48</sup>



“How Versus Why” can be paired in 291 No. 1 with an imaginary conversation, written by Paul Haviland, between the “Spirit of 291” and a “Professor,” that deals more directly with the issues of aim and identity only hinted at by Agnes Meyer.<sup>49</sup> In Haviland’s piece, the Professor interrogates “291,” “a place, a person, and a symbol,” as to what “definite thing” this “291” is. The Professor, in common with Meyer, stands opposed to all vagueness in thought and language. In reply to “291”’s assertion that it “represents nothing definite,” but is “ever growing, constantly changing and developing,” the Prof. maintains:

But somebody should know; somebody should know what it should accomplish. If ‘291’ is nothing definite but only a spirit, how can it do its work? We know now what the spirit of ‘291’ is, as nearly as a spirit can be known. What we should know for the future is ‘291’ the machine which will provide the channels through which this wonderful spirit can accomplish useful work.<sup>50</sup>

The conversation ends in a compromise between the Professor’s literal-mindedness and “291”’s reluctance to be pinned down. “Let us not quarrel about words,” the Professor declares.

You have been fighting against FIXED laws which impede progress and development. The laws I mean are but our conception of the relationship of phenomena which we use as guides in making discoveries. That, I believe is what you have always sought to discover. If ‘291’ sees clearly the path which is traced for it, great things may be expected from it for its preliminary work has been well done.<sup>51</sup>

Although the conversation ends on a conciliatory note, most of the piece is, in fact, a quite severe indictment of Stieglitz’s unwillingness to define “291”’s purpose more clearly, and a reprimand to the gallery for its recent bout of acedia. The Professor’s critical voice is the one heard most often in the conversation, and his arguments, unlike “291”’s vague and circular replies, are logical and articulate. As if to draw attention to the connection between the present discussion and “291”’s unfortunate predicament, Haviland even makes several references to the “What ‘291’ means to me” issue of Camera Work, a volume that had addressed, in its own fashion, some of these same



problems. The gallery's eclecticism and receptivity, for which contributors to that issue had had nothing but praise, seems, in fact, to be one and the same with the lack of definition that now so concerns the Professor. Significantly, the Prof. even goes so far as to quote Eduard Steichen's remark that recently "291" had only been "marking time."<sup>52</sup> The point that the conversation as a whole seems intended to convey to the reader is that, despite the faults outlined by the Professor, "291" would change its ways and make the desired leap forward into clarity of vision. Haviland's conversation thus had the effect of creating, in the manner of "How Versus Why," a distance between the old, inward-looking "291" and the pragmatic and enterprising gallery that the younger generation wanted to set up in its place. Here, as in Meyer's essay, however, the details themselves were still rather vague.

Examination of the remaining contents of 291 No. 1 helps make the meaning of Haviland's "definite thing" somewhat more clear. Other items published commented in an unambiguous voice on art activities in New York, or vociferously advocated the art of the Apollinaire circle in France, thus providing readers with an accurate idea of the magazine's stance. An activism on the part of the editors of 291 was most in evidence on the page, to become a regular feature in the magazine, devoted to short articles on artistic affairs. In contrast to Camera Work, which limited itself mainly to observations on broad tendencies in art or on the activities of the Stieglitz circle, and which rarely made direct accusations, the short article page expressed sharp and unequivocal opinions on a number of very specific issues. A renewed awareness of the world outside "291"'s doors is communicated by articles published in the first issue, which provided information not only on exhibitions at "291," but also on those taking place at a variety of "commercial" venues, including a display of drawings by Pascin at the Berlin Photographic Galleries, an "Arts and Crafts" show at the Arden Gallery, and even the large Matisse exhibition at the Montross.<sup>53</sup> In almost every instance, however, the editors of 291 took it upon themselves to draw an object lesson from these events



for the benefit of the public, usually in the form of a comparison of the exhibition under consideration with activities at "291" or with the art of the Apollinaire circle. The article on Matisse at the Montross, for example, seems little more than a pretext to pass on a witticism concerning philistine reaction to exhibits of the artist's work at "291":

Stieglitz has had two exhibitions of Matisse's work and he also says 'The Masses laughed.' And he adds that Masses =M asses = 1000 asses.<sup>54</sup>

In similar fashion, the little article on "Simultanism" drew attention to both the the Arts and Crafts show at the Arden and to Apollinaire's "simultaneous representation," the current object of fascination at "291."<sup>55</sup> The article on "Sincerism," part of which concerned the painting of Max Weber, then on view at the Print Gallery, provided an opportunity to disseminate information on Albert Savinio's musical theories, of which "291" was then in sole possession.<sup>56</sup>

Articles appearing in 291 magazine, like those published by Camera Work, frequently reveal an ambivalent attitude on the part of the editors toward the public at large. Although, on the one hand, 291 seems intended to promote the "291" gallery, and to draw a larger audience to its activities, on the other hand, the magazine often took public tastes and affectations to task in the manner of John Weichsel. On the short article page, two publics were, in fact, distinguished. The first, the mass public, which tended to laugh at modern art, was put firmly in its place by articles such as that on Matisse at the Montross, and by another, entitled "Idiotism," that reprinted a fatuous review of an exhibition by John Marin.<sup>57</sup> The second public, the one which approached modern art with an open mind, was treated much more kindly. The articles on Matisse and "Idiotism" were, in fact, probably published not only in order to dismiss the first, philistine public but also to inform members of the second, more sympathetic audience that they were not "asses," but part of the select crowd that actually got the point. While this strategy of inclusion and exclusion is familiar from Camera Work, what is new here is a reinvigorated faith, on the part of "291," in the wrongheadedness of philistine



opinion, and in the ability of at least a portion of the public to appreciate modern art without the benefit of “debates” as to its meaning. The audience for modern art does, however, come in for some rebuke. In an article on the exhibition by Rhoades and Beckett at “291,” entitled “Unilaterals,” readers were informed that

the public of ‘291’ has been accustomed to receive and never to give. It has taken it for granted that we owed it all our efforts to present to New York the principal tentatives of modern art for its own amusement, merely as a form of social function.

No, the efforts of ‘291’ in placing its public in contact with the principal achievements of modern art has not had as its objective to amuse, but to further the progress of both artist and community through a commerce of ideas.<sup>58</sup>

Although “Unilaterals,” like articles by John Weichsel, was critical of the public’s tendency to mistake the viewing of art for a social occasion, this kind of criticism also contained an element of flattery. By means of a restatement of the old “291” doctrine that the public had an important role to play in the creation of art, the editors of 291 suggested to their audience that, at present, it was the artistic avant-garde that was dependent on the public for future success, and that it should therefore make efforts to live up to its responsibilities.<sup>59</sup>

Although a variety of art was presented by 291 No. 1, that which was most wholeheartedly endorsed by the magazine was “Simultanism,” Guillaume Apollinaire’s latest enthusiasm. The very first of the short articles, which took its title from the new movement, provided a short definition of the form based, in part, on Apollinaire’s essay, “Simultanisme-Librettisme,” published by Les Soirées de Paris the previous summer.<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, the definition that appeared in 291 placed greater store in painterly and auditory, rather than more literary, examples:

The idea of Simultanism is expressed in painting by the simultaneous representation of the different figures of a form seen from different points of view as Picasso and Braque did some time ago; or by the simultaneous representation of the figure of several forms as the futurists are doing.

In literature the idea is expressed by the polyphony of different voices which say different things. Of course, printing is not an adequate medium, for



succession in this medium is unavoidable and a phonograph is more suitable.<sup>61</sup>

As an artistic illustration of Simultanism an etching by Picasso, from the artist's analytical period, was reproduced above, thus linking the new art with work for which "291" was better known [Fig. 18].<sup>62</sup> A little poem, entitled "At the Arden Gallery, 599 Fifth Avenue," made up of lines of conversation to be "uttered simultaneously," was provided below as an auditory/literary example.

Although printed forms of Simultanism were faulted by the article, "Voyage," a calligramme ("ideogramme") by Apollinaire, was given pride of place on the centre page of the issue, and seems intended as the most important illustration [Fig. 19].<sup>63</sup> Originally published in the same issue of *Les Soirées de Paris* that also reproduced de Zayas' abstract caricatures, "Voyage" was a representative example of Apollinaire's latest version of the form. In it, he combined words and lines of poetry to form images, including a train, a cloud, and a starry sky, evocative of travel by night, and even incorporated a little picture of a telegraph pole with insulators and wires that looks as if it might have been taken from a catalogue or magazine. The combination of such diverse elements was intended to produce a more complete experience of the poem's theme in the reader/viewer than that which was possible by means of a single medium, an experience that supposedly deepened as the poem-image was deciphered.<sup>64</sup> Like the little poem on the Arden gallery, "Voyage" was radically decentred, and allowed the locus of meaning to exist partly outside the artist, in the transient fragments of information that made up the work. Although this kind of dispersal of meaning was an element of Apollinaire's poetics, it is interesting that the article on Simultanism published in *291* made a point of stressing its "objective" aspect:

That the idea of simultanism is essentially naturalistic is obvious; that the polyphony of interwoven sounds and meanings has a decided effect upon our ear is unquestionable, and that we can get at the spirit of things through this system is demonstrable.<sup>65</sup>



This interpretation of Simultanism has many points in common with de Zayas's theory of art, most especially with his conviction that modern art should have an investigative intent, and it is therefore likely that the definition originated with him. De Zayas, in fact, appears here to be taking some tentative steps toward the formulation of his own version of Simultanism, related to, but distinct from, Parisian examples. It is probably no coincidence that in his definition he seems to take into account some of the more practical exigencies that modern art and "291" faced in New York City. His insistence on Simultanism's investigative purpose had the effect of making this strange new art more understandable, and thus more attractive, for practical-minded Americans, and also helped to bring this rather nebulous and suggestive art into some conformity with the editors' efforts to make "291"'s approach to art and life appear more businesslike and down-to-earth.

De Zayas' definition of "Simultanism" suggests that 291 magazine was directed, in the first instance, at a New York audience. While this was certainly the case, the situation was, I believe, somewhat more complicated than is first apparent. Much of the material published in the magazine was, of course, intended as very direct advertisement for "291" in an American market. "Oil and Vinegar Castor," the etching by Picasso reproduced on the short articles page, was probably one of the works by the artist exhibited at the gallery during the 1914-15 season, or is very like one that was.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the "Unilaterals" article, in part a review of the Rhoades-Beckett show at "291," served to draw attention to artists who were very closely associated with the gallery.<sup>67</sup> Even "Voyage," the "ideogramme" by Apollinaire reproduced inside, however, may have had a directly promotional purpose. Literary historian Willard Bohn has drawn attention to a letter written by Apollinaire to Louise de Coligny, dated April 21, 1915, that mentions an offer the poet had received to exhibit his calligrammes at "291."<sup>68</sup> "On m'a écrit pour faire une exposition de mes poèmes-ideogrammes à



New York," he wrote, "Si ça se fait, ce sera épantan."<sup>69</sup> Bohn even suggests that the visually-oriented calligrammes later published as "Case d'armons" were created by Apollinaire with this American show in mind.<sup>70</sup> It seems likely, then, that "Voyage" and the other "Simultanist" contents of 291 No. 1, functioned as advance publicity for this exhibition which, unfortunately, was never held. Much of the material in the magazine dealing with "291" seems, however, to have been directed at yet another audience as well, one made up of the very European avant-gardists who were published in it. From its inception, copies of 291 were sent to Apollinaire and Picasso in France, and subsequent issues were received by many prominent Europeans, including Ezra Pound, Adolph Basler, and even Tristan Tzara in Zurich.<sup>71</sup> Beginning with the July-August 1915 double issue (Nos. 5/6), essays published by the magazine were printed in both French and English, probably with the intention of making them more accessible to this other audience. European mailings and translations into French suggest that the contents of 291 were partly determined by a desire on the part of the editors to satisfy this European constituency. Most specifically, they seem intended to make the "291" gallery better known in Europe and to prove its avant-garde credentials in countries where the modern movement had originated. Publication of Apollinaire's "Voyage" and other more radical work in the first issue, then, demonstrated to Europeans that American galleries, and the American public, were sufficiently sophisticated in artistic matters to warrant their attention, and that New York might be a good place to publish and exhibit. Judging from Apollinaire's response to the offer of a show at "291," de Zayas and his associates were not wrong in their assessment of the possible European reaction. Subsequently, 291 published a considerable amount of Parisian material, much of which seems similarly directed at two audiences.

291 No. 1 was also the first issue of the magazine to publish material that made use of sexual and gendered imagery. While at this point I do not want to discuss this sexualised discourse at any length, because very similar imagery was used by later



contributors to the magazine in some of the same contexts, a few points should be made about certain works that appeared in No. 1. A note on the short articles page concerning the exhibition of Pascin's mildly erotic drawings at the Print Gallery, entitled "Satirism and Satyrist," is of considerable interest in that it indicates by its title that the "true record of New York life" advocated would, in fact, be a sexual one.<sup>72</sup> The article thus suggested that the relationship between the modern artist and the modern city could be thought of in sexual terms, and that such a conception might facilitate the creation of a more honest art. "At the Arden Gallery," the "Simultanist" poem that appeared on the same page, which was made up entirely of the idle chatter of women at an art exhibition, seems, in some respects, to complement the article on Pascin.<sup>73</sup> Through its explicit focus on an audience of women, the article began, in a more general way, to "feminise" the audience for art, and implied that a relation with it, on the part of male artists and critics, might also be imaged in sexual terms.<sup>74</sup> Another noteworthy characteristic of the first issue is the implication, in several works published, that women, and relations with them, are a vitally important part of the male artist's creative life, and that separation from them could lead to artistic impotence. Apollinaire's calligramme, "Voyage," for example, is, in part, about the poet's recent separation from his companion, Marie Laurencin, an event that seems to have caused him considerable distress.<sup>75</sup> In the poem, Apollinaire expresses longing for his beloved by means of modern, technological images, including a sentence in the shape of a train:

Où va donc ce train qui meurt au loin  
dans les vals et les beaux bois frais du  
tendre été si pâle? <sup>76</sup>

He sees Marie's face in the starry sky pictured at bottom, and finds promise of renewed contact in telegraph wires:

Télégraphe  
Oiseau qui laisse  
Tomber  
Ses ailes partout<sup>77</sup>



The premise that women, both real and figurative, are of great importance to the male artist as companions and muses was even more in evidence in “One Hour’s Sleep ---- Three Dreams,” the prose composition by Alfred Stieglitz that appeared immediately below Apollinaire’s “ideogramme.”<sup>78</sup> Although the work does not submit to precise interpretation, its obsessive concern with death and resurrection suggests that the “dreams” probably had much to do with Stieglitz’s fears for his own and “291”’s future. In the first dream, Stieglitz found himself dead and about to be buried. But then: “A door opened and a woman came in. As the woman came in I stood up; my eyes opened.” The woman asked, “Friend are you really dead,” but Stieglitz could not answer. “As she asked the third time I returned to my original position and was ready to be buried.” In the second dream, a woman holds out a similar promise of recovery, one which proves equally illusory. “I was very ill and everyone asked me to take a rest,” Stieglitz recounted. “No one succeeded to induce me. Finally a Woman said: ‘I will go with you. Will you go?’” As they journeyed on, however, the woman grew tired, and cried out, “Food - Food - I must have food.” Stieglitz answered: “Food - Food -, Child, we are in world where there is no Food - just Spirit - Will.” Eventually, Stieglitz kissed the woman and “all sorts of wonderful food” appeared.<sup>79</sup> She remained behind to eat while Stieglitz journeyed “onward” in his spiritual quest. The third dream, in which Stieglitz was murdered by a woman in case of mistaken identity, is the most obscure:

The Woman and I were alone in a room. She told me a Love Story. I knew it was her own. I understood why she could not love me. And as the Woman told the story - she suddenly became mad - she kissed me in her ravings....

“Tell me you are He - tell me - you are He. And if you are not He I will kill you. For I kissed you’....I said, ‘I am not He.’ And as I said that the Woman took a knife from the folds of her dress and rushed at me. She struck the heart.<sup>80</sup>

All three of these “dreams” are evidence of a strong need, on Stieglitz’s part, for women, both real and metaphoric, as a source of inspiration and strength, and of his



predilection for imaging a wide variety of concerns in terms of a relationship with them. The dreams also speak of a deep ambivalence towards this source of spiritual sustenance, for even as Stieglitz finds in women the prospect of renewal, he fears that their feminine nature will render them fallible and treacherous. Stieglitz himself thus becomes a tragic figure, divided and flawed.<sup>81</sup> In work that later appeared in 291 magazine, similar metaphors of sexual promise and deceit were applied by both men and women artists and writers in a number of otherwise unrelated contexts. Images of sexual union and successful birth were used to suggest various kinds of completion and fulfilment, while impotence and betrayal imaged failure and loss. Most specifically, these sexual polarities were mapped across the relations that de Zayas and other contributors to 291 imagined themselves to have with the city and the audience for art, both of which, as I have pointed out, were already sexualised in this first issue.

## The Early Issues

The public response to 291 No. 1, like that to all issues of the magazine, is, unfortunately, quite hard to gauge. Stieglitz and his associates did not keep subscription lists and, while 291 was mentioned in personal letters, it received relatively little attention in newspapers and other printed documents. One cannot, therefore, accurately determine either how widely the magazine was read, or by whom. In conversation with Dorothy Norman in the 1930s, Stieglitz remarked that there had been about one hundred subscribers to the regular edition and eight to the special, but that, apart from these subscriptions, not a single copy of the magazine had been sold.<sup>82</sup> Low sales, however, do not necessarily indicate that 291 was not read in artistic and literary circles in New York and elsewhere. Many copies were given away to friends and other interested parties, and many more were mailed free of charge to Europe, where, as we have seen, the magazine attracted some attention.<sup>83</sup> 291 seems also to have been quite



widely circulated among American artists and writers of advanced tendencies and among radicals and artistic hangers-on in Greenwich Village. Later, copies were also passed around at the international salon hosted by Walter Arensberg at 33 West 67th Street. 291, moreover, seems to have had an extensive circulation after it had ceased publication, both in the United States and abroad. An article by Amy Lowell on Apollinaire's calligrammes, which she had first seen in 291 No. 1, was not published in The New Republic until March 4, 1916, a full year after that issue had appeared.<sup>84</sup>

291 magazine, whatever its effect on the world at large, seems to have had a considerable impact on the Stieglitz circle itself, and on persons close to it, not all of whom approved of the new publication's aggressive stance or its preoccupation with strange European movements. Charles Caffin, the art critic for the New York World and, in the past, a frequent contributor to Camera Work, for example, wrote to Stieglitz on April 6, 1915, to express his concern about the direction that "291" was pursuing:

I used the word 'disillusionment' solely in reference to the change that seems to me to have come over the spirit of '291,' the old spirit of mutual helpfulness.

During the past winter I have felt, rightly or wrongly, that a new spirit, one of bitterness, was creeping in. Now comes the magazine which has taken the old name, but seems to be projected as an organ of antagonism.<sup>85</sup>

Caffin took particular exception to Agnes Meyer's article, "How Versus Why," which he seems to have regarded as a personal attack on his own style of criticism, even though he had not been personally mentioned. John Weichsel, whose articles critical of modern art had recently appeared in Camera Work, declared, in a letter to Stieglitz written in 1917, that he had also been "disillusioned" by "291" two years before:

It may seem strange to you, but '291' did not seem as being your place - for a thousand and one reasons - and in coming there, at first, somewhat frequently, and, later on, more and more seldom, I was conscious of invading the premises, in art and writing and decorum, of De Zayas, Haviland, Kerfoot, Dodge, and Meyer etc. - a complex of oracles that ever seemed to me hovering over the place....<sup>86</sup>

In 1915 Weichsel cut most of his ties with the gallery to start his own arts organisation,



the “People’s Art Guild.” That these changes at “291” were more than superficial is suggested by a letter that Stieglitz himself wrote to Marie Rapp on June 3, 1917, in which he signalled out Agnes Meyer and 291 as being the cause of ill-feeling between Caffin and him:

Keiley gone - and Caffin gone [Caffin died in 1917] - Nothing ever came between my friendship with them. Agnes Meyer came near doing inevitable mischief - when she wrote that article in 291 - No 1 on Criticism - between Caffin and me - Fortunately in that instance she could do only temporary mischief....A foolish woman - Her day will come.<sup>87</sup>

Although the letter was probably written with more recent bad memories also in mind, it suggests that some distrust between Stieglitz and his closer associates existed as early as the spring of 1915, and that it had been caused by 291.<sup>88</sup>

Heated responses to 291 No. 1, although they must have been somewhat disturbing, cannot have been completely unwelcome either, for they showed that the magazine and its editors had had at least some demonstrable impact on people who mattered. In a letter to Charles Freer, Agnes Meyer showed herself actually to be quite pleased with Caffin’s response to “How Versus Why”:

You will be amused to know that my article has won for me Caffin’s deepest hatred, so much that he runs away when he sees me coming. He told Stieglitz that 291 was getting ‘pugnacious’ and that the old spirit - of ‘helpfulness’ (for Caffin you see) was dead. In other words as long as we bolstered him up we were fine and now that one of us tells him he is a fossil, we are all ‘dead’.... May I never belong in spirit to the past generation.<sup>89</sup>

This little controversy suggests that the first issue of 291 magazine did have the desired effect of creating a new, more assertive personality for the gallery, at least within a limited circle of individuals. Outraged responses and the resultant changes in “291” personnel, moreover, also had the effect of consolidating Meyer, de Zayas, and Haviland even more thoroughly as the “inside” at the gallery.<sup>90</sup>

In this section of my thesis I want to look closely at the next three issues of 291



magazine, which appeared in April, May, and June of 1915 (Nos. 2-4), and which have certain features in common. Although my survey will be quite broad, I intend to concentrate on certain key issues, most especially on the question of how the editors pursued their aim, sketched out in No. 1, to make of "291" a more "definite thing." I want, in particular, to look at the ways in which the publication of 291 constituted an act of promotion for the gallery, and thus involved members of the Stieglitz circle more deeply in the business of art. If, in these issues, the gallery was made something more "definite" through the expression of clear-cut opinions, and by the promotion of certain avant-garde art and ideas, the magazine seems also to have been intended to bring a greater specificity to "291" by means of an appeal to a more sophisticated, high-society audience that might possibly be interested in buying art. Needless to say, publication of the magazine was, therefore, not entirely consistent with Stieglitz's claim that "291" constituted a commercial-free space.

Although, as I shall argue, the editors of 291 made use of a variety of quite subtle techniques in their efforts to publicise the gallery, much of the material that appeared in these earlier issues was also quite forthright in its desire to draw attention to "291" and its affairs. Most of the works published had a direct connection with activities at the gallery, and the editors seldom included work from outside the Stieglitz group or the Apollinaire circle. Works by Marius de Zayas, Agnes Meyer and Katherine Rhoades occupied an especially prominent place in the magazine, as did the art of painters affiliated with the gallery. The covers of Nos. 3 and 4, for example, were by the well known Stieglitz circle artists, John Marin and Abraham Walkowitz, both of whom had recently been exhibited there. Both these covers presented the name of the gallery in bold and contemporary contexts, thus associating it once more with the avant-garde art that was again "291"'s specialty. That of No.4 reproduced one of Marin's views of Fifth Avenue, the busy street on which "291" itself was located, drawn in the artist's most modern cubo-futurist style[Fig. 26].<sup>91</sup> Walkowitz's cover for



the third issue showed the numbers “291” afloat at the centre of an abstract maelstrom of ink, not overwhelmed, but seemingly at home there [Fig. 23].<sup>92</sup> Publication of work by members of the Apollinaire circle seems similarly intended, in part, to publicise the “291” gallery. Although work by Apollinaire himself did not appear again, his name was mentioned several times in these issues, often with regard to that same urban environment featured on the covers, and the composer Albert Savinio, another important member of the Apollinaire circle, was also the subject of much attention.<sup>93</sup> An autograph score of Savinio’s song, “Bellovees Fatales No. 12,” was reproduced in the second issue, while his manifesto on music appeared in No.4.<sup>94</sup> As has already been noted, the fact that Apollinaire was to have been exhibited at “291” and Savinio to have given a concert in New York helps to explain the attention paid to these men in the magazine.<sup>95</sup>

Less obvious means used in 291 magazine to publicise the “291” gallery did not involve references to particular artists and exhibitions, but had more to do with the type of material published and the methods by which it was presented. That the look of the magazine was notably eye-catching itself probably bore some relation to such a promotional purpose. Where the first issue had published several long pieces of prose that contained involved discussions of art, in subsequent numbers brevity was the norm in prose pieces and the overall focus shifted noticeably to the visual elements. It is, in fact, probably not a coincidence that 291 came to resemble some of the advertisements towards which Apollinaire had directed the attention of artists, and that the same visually-oriented style, with short snippets of prose, also characterised the appearance of such widely-circulated magazines as Puck and Vanity Fair.<sup>96</sup> [Figs. 27, 28] In 291, this graphic style was taken to such lengths that whole pages were frequently devoted to one image, within which effective use was made of striking juxtapositions. On the inside double page of No. 3, for example, which combined poems by Meyer and



Rhoades with an abstract drawing by de Zayas, the type is oriented in different directions, and a deep black covers half the page to create a powerful overall effect.<sup>97</sup> [Fig. 24] Beginning with issue four, the page devoted to short articles was dropped from the magazine, a change that allowed the editors to aim for an even greater visual impact. This tendency in 291 culminated in the double issue, Nos. 5/6, which was given over entirely to Picabia's machine-drawings (and an essay on them by de Zayas) [Figs. 33-37].<sup>98</sup> These five portraits of the "insiders" at "291" in the form of machines could hardly have been a more effective vehicle for the brash, contemporary image that "291" was trying to present.

The most conspicuous characteristic of 291 magazine, however, was the combination into one work of elements from different media, most especially the union of words and images that had been heralded in No. 1. Examples of the "visual poem," based on Apollinaire and Futurist models, and made up of words arranged into shapes or a combination of words and graphic material, appeared in almost every subsequent issue. The presence of such work in the magazine can, as has already been noted, be partly explained by the fact that "Simultanism" was something unique to "291" and thus served to distinguish the gallery from other players in a crowded field. Beginning with No. 2, however, the editors were not content only to publish European examples of the form, but were ready to try their hands at Simultanism for themselves. "Mental Reactions," a collaboration between Agnes Meyer (words) and Marius de Zayas (image) in No. 2 was the first such work that appeared [Fig. 21], to be followed by J. B. Kerfoot's "A Bunch of Keys" in No. 3 [Fig. 25], and de Zayas' portrait, "Femme!," in No. 9 [Fig. 43].<sup>99</sup> In these works, the definition of Simultanism that de Zayas had provided in the first issue, which stressed the naturalistic and investigative potential of the form, was, consciously or unconsciously, put into practice. In keeping with de Zayas' positivist aspirations, most American "visual poetry" published by 291 was noticeably less anarchic than European examples, and aimed to provide a clear-cut



description of the subject under consideration. In Kerfoot's "A Bunch of Keys" and the (much later) "Femme!" by de Zayas, for example, although the different parts of the poem were dispersed on the page in the manner of Apollinaire's calligrammes, there remained little question of how these parts related to one another, and a single quite unambiguous meaning thus emerged.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, most American examples of "visual poetry," including the three works already mentioned, were also portraits of distinct individuals.<sup>101</sup> Appropriation of the techniques of Simultanism allowed authors to present the different aspects of a person's character side by side, without the presence of distracting connecting material. In "Mental Reactions," for example, which recorded a woman's thoughts during a flirtation at a party, Meyer and de Zayas were able, by means of the simultaneous presentation of ideas, to suggest an anxious state of self-division:

How can he bear to speak of it if it was real to him?

PARFUMERIE DE NICE dots  
Red on whiteness.

Ah, there you go sitting in judgment again from the personal point of view. He has the ability to give his very self. Be big enough to accept whatever is given you.

## PARFUM ULTRA PERSISTANT

## CrèmeS

Shouldn't it be a circumflex?

But is it fair  
to the woman?  
Does it make her  
less - or more?<sup>102</sup>

Despite its striking appearance, however, "Mental Reactions" remains essentially descriptive, even if the "investigation" into the subject at hand was here conducted by introspective, rather than "objective," means. Although the interplay of words and



images creates a certain amount of difficulty for the reader, it soon becomes clear that lines and words are set out in two distinct columns which can be quite easily understood when read from top left to bottom right.<sup>103</sup> The presence of such traditional elements serves to differentiate the poem from certain European examples where a dispersal of meaning among the transient objects of the artist's perceptual consciousness is more in evidence (see Apollinaire, "Lettre-Océan" for comparison [Fig. 22]).<sup>104</sup> Whatever difficulties are presented by "Mental Reactions" are more the result of the psychological complexity of the characters portrayed than of the poets' attempt to communicate a perceptual and conceptual state of mind.<sup>105</sup>

The presence in 291 of this "American" adaptation of Simultanism had the effect of toning down some of the radicalism of the magazine while leaving it visually and emotionally interesting. This tendency seems to reflect a desire, on the part of the editors, to make of this strange new art something more "definite," and therefore more acceptable to skeptical-minded Americans. Such a practical disposition on the part of 291 was probably also related to the decidedly urbane and worldly quality possessed by these and other works published, a characteristic of the magazine that makes up another of its more conspicuous features. Both these elements seem intended to make 291 attractive for those more sophisticated, if yet still somewhat provincial, middle and upper class members of the audience for art who might be expected to form its readership. The distinctive tone possessed by 291 is particularly noticeable when it is compared with Camera Work. Where the older periodical offered its readers Weichsel's earnest social-aesthetic moralising, or de Zayas' rather tedious theoretical articles, 291 published a considerable number of lighter, more amusing items that were addressed to readers' lively, if rather superficial, interest in the entertaining things of the modern world. Short articles in Nos. 2 and 3, for example, commented on such subjects as the New York Flower Show, the premiere of Scriabin's "Prometheus" Symphony at Carnegie Hall, a performance by a company of Irish players in Greenwich Village, and



even such controversial matters as illegitimacy and suicide.<sup>106</sup>

The “American” visual poems already discussed inhabit a similarly lively and cosmopolitan, if rather bourgeois, environment. Although J. B. Kerfoot based the radiating circular form of “A Bunch of Keys” [Fig. 25] on Apollinaire’s calligramme, “Lettre-Océan” [Fig. 22], he seems unaware of the French poet’s ambition to image the profound changes in consciousness created by modern communication. Instead, Kerfoot offered the reader a charming and quite comprehensible portrait of an individual in a confining upper middle-class existence, aspects of which were represented by the “keys” on the chain:

FRONTDOOR  
KEY

SEGARHUMI  
DOR

WINECELLAR  
DOOR

MYOFFICED  
ESK<sup>107</sup>

A rather facile piece of social satire, “A Bunch of Keys” would have been quite at home in one of the more popular New York magazines to which, as we have seen, members of the “291” circle also contributed.<sup>108</sup> Even the more complex, “avant-garde” works published in the earlier issues of 291 reflect this same leisured upper and middle class milieu. “Mental Reactions,” for example, records, as has already been noted, a modern woman’s thoughts during a flirtation at a fashionable party [Fig. 21].<sup>109</sup> The setting for the encounter is an apartment far above the New York streets, and it is obviously a luxurious one, for De Zayas and Meyer even provide examples of the perfume and chocolate box labels (“PARFUMERIE DE NICE,” “CrèmeS”) that surround the protagonists.<sup>110</sup> Much of the poem is made up of hair-splitting introspective analysis of



motives, feelings, and reactions of others to the self, that serves to identify the woman, and to a lesser extent her companion, as intelligent, sophisticated and thoroughly modern. Such a portrayal of sensitive people in a very contemporary situation would, I believe, have appealed to readers with pretensions to the same degree of urbanity. The poem effectively connected modern art and literature with a very specific setting, one where art and social environment seemed to complement one another.

I do not want to give the impression, however, that all the work published in these issues of 291 was bland and superficial. Much of this material, even as it seems intended to cater to a specific audience, was intellectually quite astute and commented in a clear and perceptive voice on a variety of issues. The tone of notices on the short article pages, for example, remained more candid and critical than that of similar articles in Camera Work, and “truthtelling” about the art world was much in evidence. As it had done in the first issue, 291 continued to draw the attention of the public, and public institutions, to their civic responsibilities. The New York Academy of Design, for example, was told that it did not, in fact, need larger premises, just good art to put on its walls (“The Academy,” No. 2).<sup>111</sup> United States tariff laws were found to be a disgrace in that they restricted the free import of European art (“Do Not Do Unto Others,” No. 2), while the valuation of work on the basis of its origin in a famous collection was deemed to be equally reprehensible (“Values in Art,” No. 2).<sup>112</sup> By means of the short articles page, then, the editors of 291 maintained “291”’s reputation as an honest voice in art. The custodian of high standards, the magazine challenged the art world to do better.

Short articles published in the second and third issues, unlike those appearing in No. 1, also dealt with a number of subjects seemingly unrelated to art as such. Thus, beginning with No. 2, 291 magazine presumed to arbitrate not only on artistic affairs, but on musical matters as well. While the “new music” of Albert Savinio had already



been introduced by a short item in No. 1 (“Sincerism”), the second issue published articles not only on Savinio, but also on American composer-pianist Leo Ornstein, and on Alexander Scriabin’s “Prometheus” Symphony.<sup>113</sup> The score of Savinio’s “Bellovees Fatales No. 12” (“Fatal Bellowings No. 12”) also appeared in No. 2, and his manifesto on music, “Dammi l’anatema, cosa lasciva” (“Strike Me with Anathema, Lascivious Thing”), which condemned most contemporary music for its sentimentality, was reprinted in No. 4.<sup>114</sup> Although, as has been noted, this material was intended primarily to draw attention to Savinio, its inclusion may also have had a more ambitious purpose as well. Performances of spectacular orchestral works by such composers as Scriabin, Strauss, and Schoenberg had the ability to draw in much larger crowds than most exhibitions of contemporary art.<sup>115</sup> Identification of “291” with music may, therefore, have been partly intended to capture for the gallery some of music’s greater prestige and to bring a portion of its audience into the “291” fold.<sup>116</sup> While material on music made up a considerable portion of the contents of the short articles page, beginning with the second issue commentary was extended to cover to an even broader range of interests. Among the articles, for example, were no fewer than two on the subject of illegitimate births, and the grief that the social stigma attached to illegitimacy could cause.<sup>117</sup> The more substantial of these, entitled “Motherhood a Crime” (No. 2), quoted a newspaper report about the case of a New Haven woman who took her own life rather than bear her child and then asked:

Should not this dramatically condensed report of the tragedy of a girl’s life receive more than passing attention? We go to see Brieux’s Maternity at the theatre. We applaud and adjourn to the the dansant. When it comes to the test what do we do?<sup>118</sup>

There is a decided social conscience at work in this article that is new to “291” and that served to associate the magazine with the women’s movement and with the more general tendency, then taking place, towards greater social and sexual freedom, an aspect of 291 that will be discussed in more detail below.



In the short articles we also learn more about the editors' opinion of the American public, a subject that had, of course, been of great interest to the gallery for some time. As in the past, two "publics" were distinguished, each of which was dealt with in an appropriate manner. The mass public, which, as has already been noted, had been severely dismissed by articles in the first issue, was again faulted in No. 2 for tolerating disasters at air shows as the price of entertainment. After providing details of two such gruesome incidents, 291 commented:

The American public is very indignant at the loss of innocent lives on the battlefields of Europe.

Bull fights are prohibited on U. S. territory. Our kind hearts rebel at the idea of cruelty to animals.

But the Public must be amused.<sup>119</sup>

This article, like many of the others published, has an arch, superior tone to it that easily distanced "291" from these kinds of events and the people who enjoyed them. The article also demonstrates just how remote the 291 group was from participation in popular conceptions of the modern and its marvels, despite the celebration of a more urbane modernity elsewhere in the magazine. In contrast, the Futurists, members of an avant-garde movement to which 291 owed a great deal, would have applauded this kind of behaviour as heroic.<sup>120</sup>

Another familiar tactic, the playing up of European art and ideas at the expense of American work, also made a frequent appearance in the short articles. This device was used by the editors, as it had been in the first issue, to distinguish "291," the centre of a genuine modernism, from the facsimiles available elsewhere. Thus, Leo Ornstein, the American composer-pianist, was compared unfavourably with Savinio, his counterpart in the Apollinaire group. Ornstein's compositions, the reader was informed,

are toy imitations. Although they are intricate in their structure, the spirit has the naive charm of a child imitating what strikes his attention.<sup>121</sup>



In other articles, most notably the one entitled “Watch Their Steps,” published in No. 3, the European perspective was also used to create a distance between “291” and the wider American culture. The author of “Watch Their Steps,” for example, found that women’s shoes were a sort of unconscious modern art “trying to get into the feet” of Americans.<sup>122</sup>

For the first time the spirit of modern art has been genuinely manifested in this country.

Women’s shoes reveal a new mentality at work.

They break away from convention. They give the pleasure of the unexpected.

They are the expression of a love of disharmony.

They have no rhythm.

They have no balance.

They synthesize the abstract.<sup>123</sup>

While these comments were very generous, the article also identified such recognition of the unexpected in the ordinary as a uniquely Apollinairean project:

Apollinaire that profound observer of the superficial brought to artistic significance the squeaking of the ‘new shoes of the poet.’ Unhappily we have no poet in New York who could sing of the forms that women are wearing now.<sup>124</sup>

With this reference to Apollinaire, the article began to suggest that, while appreciation of this kind of mass cultural phenomenon was acceptable, it must, if the American observer was not to be corrupted, be carried out through the intermediary of a poet with good Parisian credentials. “291”’s European alliances seem to have conditionally allowed it to be that “New York poet,” and watch American culture from a safe distance.<sup>125</sup>

I suspect that here we start to get at something quite important for the editors of 291. On the short articles page, and in the magazine as a whole, the editors exhibited both a fascination with the variety, excitement and vitality of modern life, and an equally strong need to keep an intellectual distance from this object of fascination. This double attitude, which was not unusual among modern artists and critics of all



nationalities, seems, however, to have been especially characteristic of the “291” group, and probably reflects the precariousness of the foothold that its members believed they had gained in American society.<sup>126</sup> This interest in and simultaneous distrust of popular culture was also closely connected, I suspect, with the similar ambivalence that the editors of 291 held towards the American art audience. This audience, of course, was not the same as the mass public, but it shared some of the same tastes, and seemed to exhibit the same inability to distinguish true from false. It was, moreover, as the Armory Show had demonstrated, also a force that could have a great deal of influence on art in the United States.

The most interesting article on the subject of the art public in the earlier issues of 291 is one in No. 2, entitled “Economic Laws and Art,” that purported to explain the significance of the “American Moderns” show which had been on view at the Montross Gallery between March 23 and April 24, 1915.<sup>127</sup> This was the same exhibition that had given critic Henry McBride the occasion to note, in the review already discussed, that the organiser of the show, Arthur B. Davies, had proved himself “a better propagandist” for Cubism than others in New York.<sup>128</sup> Although a number of artists respected by the Stieglitz circle were represented in the exhibition, the majority of the art shown was of a kind that marked the Montross Gallery out as a purveyor of “sham cubism” to a gullible public.<sup>129</sup> Despite its tawdriness in the eyes of “291,” however, the exhibition was well attended, and for this reason seems to have merited comment in 291. The editors led off their article with an assessment of the exhibition’s importance for New York:

There are many things in the Montross Show of American Moderns which tempt the critic to lay about him and slay unmercifully, but as a unit the exhibition is unquestionably interesting and significant. The mere fact that such an exhibition can take place on Fifth Avenue where rents must be paid, is an important indication of the change in public attitude, and the added fact that the gallery was usually crowded at twenty-five cents per head, shows that the interest is not spotty but widespread.<sup>130</sup>



Such solid observation, however, soon gave way to snide speculation as readers were asked to consider the question: ““Who took the lead, the artists or the public?”” The article elaborated:

In other words is American cubism, or futurism, so sincere an expression that the speedy conversion of the public to its serious consideration was inevitable, or did the public interest, aroused by 291 and the big Armory Exhibition of French Moderns, create a demand which our men are trying to supply?<sup>131</sup>

The writers of the article found that both influences had been present, “thus leaving to the buying public an interesting opportunity of furthering modern thought by weeding out the true from the false....” Prospects for art were, however, not very bright because the event also offered

to those who have reached a conclusion as to the critical faculties of the public, an opportunity of prophesying some of the future developments of art in America.<sup>132</sup>

The conclusion readers were meant to draw from this carefully-worded sarcasm was that the public had been so thoroughly corrupted that it was incapable of judging correctly, and was thus unable to contribute anything worthwhile to art in America. The Montross Gallery, moreover, was only a link in a vicious circle. Its recent promotion of a false art had served to debase the public taste, a development that would in future lead to a further deterioration in art.<sup>133</sup>

Superficially, “Economic Laws and Art” seems completely pessimistic in its opinion of the art public, not far removed in its contempt from that expressed by John Weichsel in his articles for Camera Work. Beneath the scorn, however, the authors of the article seemed to recognise, with a certain awe, that the magnitude of the response to the exhibition at the Montross itself gave the event a real importance (“The mere fact that such an exhibition can take place on Fifth Avenue where rents must be paid....”). Moreover, the article also displayed a marked fascination with a process that would allow the public to influence “the furthering of modern thought by weeding out the true from the false.” Although intended as a piece of satire, “Economic Laws and Art”



seems, therefore, also to acknowledge frankly the importance of the public for the well-being of art in the United States, and to admit that a meaningful advance was not possible without its participation. I suspect that the exhibition at the Montross was so fascinating for the editors of 291 because it was an event that had succeeded in the same public arena where, by means of the magazine, they themselves were now attempting to operate. Although the exhibition was not one that they would have liked to organise, the editors betrayed an awareness that a similar success at "291" would necessarily involve the same level of participation on the part of the art public, and a consequent acknowledgement by gallery insiders that the public had a significant role to play. Conclusions such as these must have been difficult to face, however, and it is hardly surprising that "Economic Laws and Art" attempted to maintain distinctions between a corrupt public and one that possibly had something to contribute, and between honest players in the marketplace ("291") and more suspect participants (Montross, etc.).

A double attitude on the part of 291 toward the American public seems also to be closely connected with a similar ambivalence toward business, in art and elsewhere. The very last short article to appear in the magazine, entitled "Ave Caesar Imperator!!! Morituri te Salutant!," treated the "AMERICAN BUSINESS MAN" in the same heavily ironic manner to which the public had been subjected in "Economic Laws and Art."<sup>134</sup> The article began by presuming to praise the businessman for his fortitude in the face of "yellow journalists of all shades that have constantly hounded him...." In spite of such opposition, 291 found that the businessman had

gone on working, meeting all hindrances and difficulties, lastly turning into the country's greatest good the present cataclysm that might have so easily been its ruin.<sup>135</sup>

The insinuation here was, I believe, that American businessmen had now turned war-profiteers and were benefiting from the suffering of others. The article went on to pose yet another set of rhetorical questions and to provide an answer for them:

If we wish to find the greatest imaginative powers of our country, do we think of our artists? The question is almost ludicrous when we compare the realised



imaginings of the artistic and the business world. Where is our most effective, our most adventurous thought? Who creates and guides and supports our universities, our charitable and artistic and scientific endeavours of every sort? In short who is the only man without whom we could not get along, politicians, social workers, and college professors notwithstanding?...The answer to all these questions is too obvious. Our social structure may be a machine that is clumsy, inefficient, antiquated, but verily it hath its god.<sup>136</sup>

It is very hard to know what to make of these final sentences. On the surface, they seem intended as a further ironic indictment of the importance American society placed on business and its culture. But most of these statements could also be taken as the honest truth. The “realised imaginations of the artistic and the business world” were indeed very different, and tended to fall mainly on the side of business. Businessmen did, moreover, to some extent support the arts, universities, and so on. The article takes on an even stranger aspect when one recalls that the “291” gallery itself existed largely at the pleasure of business people. Paul Haviland, scion of a porcelain fortune, had, in the past, paid the rent, while Eugene Meyer, husband to Agnes and an up-and-coming banker, made frequent contributions and purchases. Stieglitz himself had some money of his own which he put into the gallery, but he and his family were supported largely by income from his wife’s share in the brewery managed by her brothers. If “Morituri te Salutant!...” was meant as sarcasm, then the opinions expressed were blatantly in conflict with some of the gallery’s own practices, and it is hard not to read the piece as an example of singularly bad faith on 291’s part.

Would it be going too far to find a sort of self-deconstructing discourse here? a moment when irony loses its balance and one can no longer tell parody from the real thing? At the very least, this article seems to inhabit a place where 291 was not quite sure of its bearings, or of its allegiance. Although the indignation expressed, both here and in the article on the Montross exhibition, was probably honestly felt, it also seems touched with a great deal of envy and resentment (Why is the piece entitled “They who are about to die, salute thee?”), that suggests the editors were not entirely happy with “291”’s own practices. The articles are evidence that their loyalties were alternating



between “291” and the promise held out by a wider contact with the public, and between Stieglitz’s idealism and the methods of the business world.

## The Machine Portraits

An interest on the part of the editors of 291 with the public and with business reached its high point in an essay by Marius de Zayas that appeared in the summer 1915 double issue, Nos. 5/6. (The article does not have a title, but begins, “New York, at first, did not see...”)<sup>137</sup> The subject of this essay was the importance for American art of the “object portraits,” or machine drawings, by Francis Picabia that made up most of the issue [Figs. 33-37]<sup>138</sup> De Zayas’ essay, which I plan to discuss at some length in this section of my thesis, concerned itself with some of the same issues of the public and business that had recently been the subject of such short articles as “Economic Laws and Art,” and “Ave Caesar Imperator!!! Morituri te Salutant!” While the essay is open to several interpretations, I intend to argue here that it says as much about de Zayas’ own preoccupations and about the direction in which he was taking “291,” as it does about either the object portraits or modern art in America. Picabia’s new art seems, in fact, to have helped de Zayas to establish a rapprochement with the business ethic toward which the short articles had shown such ambivalence.

Francis Picabia, who had last been in the United States at the time of the Armory Show, returned to New York in June of 1915, ostensibly en route to Cuba on a mission for the French government but, in actual fact, on the run from the war in Europe. Picabia was welcomed back to “291” with enthusiasm and quickly made himself at home in New York City, where he remained until early in 1916.<sup>139</sup> Picabia was soon intimately involved with the day-to-day production of 291 magazine, and his works were soon published in its pages.<sup>140</sup> The first of these to appear, a drawing



entitled “Fille née sans mère,” the “Daughter born without a mother,” reproduced in the June 1915 issue (No. 4), marked the beginning of the artist’s “mechanomorphic” period [Fig. 32].<sup>141</sup> In this unusual work, Picabia combined organic forms reminiscent of breasts and tendons with such mechanical elements as springs and levers to create a work that hardly looked much like art at all. The drawing’s precursors included Futurist art and ideas and recent works by Picabia’s friend Marcel Duchamp (the “Bride” pictures, “Chocolate Grinder”) but it had also been anticipated by Picabia’s own abstract paintings of 1914 (“Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie,” etc., recently exhibited at “291” [Fig. 16]) which contained similar rounded, lunging forms. The import of the drawing, and its title, was that machines and works of art should both be considered as “Filles nées sans mère,” autonomous creations brought forth entire by the mind of man.<sup>142</sup> The appearance of such a strange work in the pages of 291 probably reflected the greater importance that de Zayas and Picabia had assumed in the editorship of the publication and constituted a challenge to readers to follow the magazine into places where they had not yet been asked to go.

The “Fille née sans mère,” however, was only a taste of what was to come. During Picabia’s stay in New York, the surface appearance of his art underwent a complete change as the artist discarded the abstract forms he had been using for several years and replaced them with a vocabulary of machine parts and epigrammatic sayings that he wrote directly onto the canvas.<sup>143</sup> The July-August double issue of 291 reproduced the first major works in this new style, five “portraits” of Stieglitz, de Zayas, Meyer, Haviland, and Picabia himself, in the form of machines.<sup>144</sup> Visually, these works, which had more the appearance of diagrams than art, were at an even farther remove from Picabia’s abstract style than the “Fille née sans mère.” Almost every detail in them was based on illustrations that the artist had found in American magazines and catalogues and could be identified as part of an actual machine [Fig.



38].<sup>145</sup> Although the machine drawings were unusual when looked at from the point of view of art, their strangeness was somewhat deceptive, for with some knowledge of Picabia's purpose they were quite readily understandable, and could be seen to have points in common with his abstract work as well. On one level, Picabia was, in fact, attempting to provide quite straightforward portraits of persons with whom he was acquainted, using a symbolism that represented traits of an individual's character by means of an appropriate machine part. Thus, Stieglitz, a photographer, was depicted as a camera [Fig. 33], but one that had broken itself reaching for the "IDEAL." The gear shift in neutral position at the right of the portrait was probably included as a reference to his current state of inactivity and indecision and was thus part of the internal critique of Stieglitz already underway.<sup>146</sup> Haviland, who was about to return to France to help manage the family porcelain firm, was portrayed as a portable lamp with the comment, "La poésie est comme lui" [Fig. 37].<sup>147</sup>

Picabia's most complete statement on the machine drawings, and the machine paintings that followed, is contained in an article entitled "French Artists Spur on American Art," published in the New York Tribune on October 24, 1915.<sup>148</sup> This article, which also included material from interviews with Marcel Duchamp, Jean Crotti, Albert and Juliette Gleizes, as well as Marius de Zayas, attempted to demonstrate the impact that the New World was supposed to have had on recent French artist-emigrés to the United States. The artists interviewed all expressed great enthusiasm for their new home, none more so than Picabia, who ascribed the invention of his new artistic style entirely to the influence of the mechanised American environment. "I have been profoundly impressed by the vast mechanical development in America," he told the interviewer.

The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of life. It is really a part of human life - perhaps the very soul. In seeking forms through which to interpret ideas or by which to expose human characteristics I have come at length upon the form which appears most brilliantly plastic and fraught with symbolism. I have enlisted the machinery of the modern world, and introduced it into my



studio.<sup>149</sup>

Underlying Picabia's enthusiasm for machinery was the conviction, also expressed by the other artists interviewed that, since the outbreak of war, the United States had become a place more congenial for the production of art than Europe. "In America work of an artistic nature is possible," Picabia maintained, "where it is utterly impossible in Europe to-day. The war has killed the art of the Continent utterly."<sup>150</sup> What is most remarkable about Picabia's statement, however, is the magnitude of the artistic conversion he attributed to the effect of his coming to New York, and the extent to which he was willing to give himself over to his new environment:

Prior to leaving Europe I was engrossed in presenting psychological studies through the mediumship of forms which I created. Immediately upon coming to America it flashed on me that the genius of the modern world is machinery, and that through machinery art ought to find a most vivid expression.<sup>151</sup>

Picabia seemed to imply here that he, an introverted European, had needed the jarring experience of brash and outgoing New York to bring him out of himself and take a look at the world around him. Such sentiments, perhaps, were not surprising, given his recent experience of events in Europe.<sup>152</sup>

Picabia's machine drawings were, in fact, not quite as radical a departure from the artist's former methods as he maintained in the interview, the same theory of correspondence between inner being and outer reality that had provided the intellectual rationale for his abstract style also serving as the foundation for the mechanical work. Where, in his abstract paintings, Picabia had used pure forms to denote ideas or emotions aroused in him by an exterior event, in the machine drawings he replaced these with mechanical elements used in precisely the same manner. In both styles, "reality" was transformed by the mind of the artist to create work thought to be a more lucid and accurate portrayal of affairs.<sup>153</sup> There is also evidence, from the drawings themselves, that Picabia had not, in fact, been as completely won over by life in the



United States as he claimed, for most of the machine portraits contain satirical elements that seem to mock, in a gentle manner, certain uniquely “American” traits possessed by the individuals portrayed. Beautiful young Agnes Meyer, for example, depicted as a high-quality sparkplug, was shown to be the American super-flirt, giving off sparks and promising “FOR-EVER” but, in fact, hard and unapproachable [Fig. 35].<sup>154</sup> As a group, moreover, the machine portraits implied that the insiders at “291,” and Americans generally, were partly under the control of the mechanical environment around them and had thus given up a part of their humanity. In so far as Picabia suggested that Americans were not, in fact, masters of their own fate, his new work constituted a pointed critique of American culture.

Almost as interesting as Picabia’s machine-portraits themselves is the accompanying essay by Marius de Zayas, “New York, at first, did not see...,” which extolled the French artist’s new works as examples of authentic American art.<sup>155</sup> The essay’s shrill and abusive tone stands at some distance from the more reasoned style of de Zayas’ theoretical writings, and was probably intended to draw outraged attention to itself and Picabia. De Zayas began his essay with an analysis of the current condition of American art, a fact that itself comes as something of a surprise. Although de Zayas, and the other members of the Stieglitz circle, had often expressed concern for the fortunes of art in America, art’s uniquely American characteristics had seldom warranted extended comment in the group’s publications. (The “American” form of Simultanism I distinguished in previous issues seems not to have been thought of as such.) Despite his former lack of interest, however, in “New York, at first, did not see...” de Zayas found it necessary to deplore the fact that a uniquely American form of modern art did not yet exist. Disregarding his own strong European allegiances, he informed the magazine’s readers that it was precisely the accumulated weight of foreign borrowings that had discouraged its development:

All genuine American activities are entirely in accord with the spirit of modern art. But American intellectuality is a protective covering which prevents all



conception. This intellectuality is borrowed, exotic. Better still it is a paste diamond.<sup>156</sup>

American “intellectuals” were, in fact, found to be American art’s greatest enemy:

Beware, messieurs the Americans of your intellectuals. They are dangerous counterfeits. They believe themselves to have a luminous mission; but their light dazzles the eyes instead of illuminating....

The real American life is still unexpressed.

America remains to be discovered.<sup>157</sup>

De Zayas then went on to fault even the work of Alfred Stieglitz in an unprecedented public attack that served, in a striking manner, to distance de Zayas, and 291, from his old mentor. Although de Zayas had considerable praise for Stieglitz’s efforts on behalf of photography, he found that in his role as exhibitor of modern art he had acted as yet another “cold-blooded” intellectual:

Stieglitz wanted to work this miracle.

He wanted to discover America. Also, he wanted Americans to discover themselves. But in pursuing his object, he employed the shield of psychology and metaphysics. He has failed.<sup>158</sup>

De Zayas attributed this failure to Stieglitz’s attempts “to work through suggestion,” a method that had, in his opinion, proved too timid to have much effect in the United States. Blame for the backwardness of American art was not his alone, however. After Stieglitz had shown examples of modern work in New York, its mannerisms were taken up and corrupted by others:

But soon commercialism brought an avalanche of paintings. Those lepers, those scullery maids of art, those Sudras of progress - the copyists, got busy. They even believed themselves to be part of the evolution because, instead of copying trees, they copied a method.<sup>159</sup>

Taken as is, this blanket condemnation of art activity in the United States would seem to apply to work produced by artists of the Stieglitz circle, as well as to that shown by the “commercial” galleries, but de Zayas’ comments were probably directed mainly at the latter.<sup>160</sup>



What was apparently needed if a true American art was to come into being was some sort of naked encounter with the objective environment as it existed in the United States. "America remains to be discovered," de Zayas declared. "And to do it there is but one way: ---- DISCOVER IT!"<sup>161</sup> Details of the process by which this discovery might be made were not provided, and it seems likely that they were not very clear even to de Zayas himself. The American artist's task, he wrote, was to express the country's "potentiality" in art and thus teach America how "to amuse itself." De Zayas' lengthy analysis of the artistic situation in the United States led up to an appraisal of Francis Picabia's new art which, he found, was the product of just such an unabashed encounter with the objective:

Of all those who have come to conquer America, Picabia is the only one who has done as did Cortez. He has burned his ship behind him. He does not protect himself with any shield. He has married America like a man who is not afraid of the consequences. He has obtained results.<sup>162</sup>

Picabia was thus enlisted as a sort of honorary American who, by virtue of his unclouded modern mind, was able to see what was actually before his eyes.

Although de Zayas' celebration of Picabia as an authentic American artist is strange, there were some quite good reasons behind his enthusiasm for the man and his new work, reasons that had much to do with the circumstances that de Zayas and "291" found themselves in at the time. On the most basic level, the essay was yet another effort to publicise the gallery in New York, at a time when it faced stiff competition from other venues. Picabia, a well known European artist associated with the most recent tendencies in modern art, was someone with whom the members of "291," just then exhibiting a renewed interest in the avant-garde, would very much have wanted to be connected. By proclaiming Picabia the artist of the American scene, moreover, de Zayas could also counter the claims of galleries such as the Montross to be the centres of American modernism. Picabia's presence in New York and his production of "American" work therefore gave American art back to "291." De Zayas' enthusiasm for



the machine drawings was probably also influenced by their similarity to work that had already appeared in 291 magazine. Although he chose to ignore the satirical element in the drawings, their brand of slightly racy humour was comparable in spirit to work that had already been published, notably J. B. Kerfoot's "A Bunch of Keys."<sup>163</sup> In so far as the machine portraits used the ordinary stuff of the modern world to create highly personal combinations, they were also an example of the Simultanism that had already been so prominently featured in 291. Their rather technical appearance, moreover, linked them with pronouncements on "scientific" art and criticism made in "How Versus Why," and with the practical uses for Simultanism that de Zayas had outlined in his article on the subject for No. 1. At the very end of "New York, at first, did not see...", de Zayas even made this connection explicit when he suggested that Picabia had used his new art as an investigative tool:

He has obtained results. And he has brought these to '291' which accepts them as experience, and publishes them with the conviction that they have the positive value which all striving towards objective truth possesses.<sup>164</sup>

Like much of the Simultanism already published in 291, moreover, Picabia's drawings possessed features that would possibly allow them to be appreciated by a wider public. Superficially "realistic" in style, they also contained clues to their interpretation that could render them quite understandable, at least to the initiated. This apparent accessibility may, I suspect, have further encouraged de Zayas in his belief that the machine drawings might form the seed for a new American art.<sup>165</sup>

While these considerations were probably all factors in de Zayas' ecstatic reception of the machine drawings, some other less obvious motives were, I suspect, also present. The depth of de Zayas' enthusiasm for Picabia's new work was astonishing and by its very intensity gives rise to a certain amount of incredulity. How can work by a wealthy Spanish-French expatriate really be American art? Why was American art suddenly so important when it had not been before? And why was an art



based on advertising, of all things, suddenly acceptable at “291”? It is, of course, very likely that de Zayas’ essay was written very much under the influence of Picabia’s own enthusiasm for the United States and that he was expressing opinions the two men held in common. It is also possible that the essay was a reflection of the general increase in the level of American nationalism that took place after the outbreak of World War I. Nationalism, in art and elsewhere, was, however, not yet very much in evidence by mid-1915 and de Zayas’ own enthusiasm for American art was, moreover, remarkably short lived.<sup>166</sup> The following two issues of 291 (Nos. 7/8 and No. 9) presented American work of a sort (by Stieglitz, de Zayas and Picabia) but in the winter of 1915-16 the magazine was publishing more European material than ever before.<sup>167</sup> There is also, however, a real possibility that “New York, at first, did not see...” was written not only for the benefit of the American public but with 291’s considerable European audience also in mind. By the summer of 1915, de Zayas and his associates appear to have succeeded in their aim of demonstrating to Parisian artists and writers that New York offered considerable exhibition and publication opportunities. American credentials, however, were still far from assured and de Zayas may have seen in the machine portraits a further opportunity to promote “America” and “New York” to Parisians in a manner that they would have understood. “Picabia has gone native!” de Zayas’ essay seemed to say.” “Machines are the new source of modern art! The United States is the world’s new art centre!” It was perhaps with a Parisian audience in mind that the essay was printed first in French, in large letters, followed by an English translation below. Some sixty copies of Nos. 5/6 were, in fact, mailed to Paris in August of 1915.<sup>168</sup>

I suspect, however, that there was still another important reason for de Zayas’ fascination with Picabia’s art. To give some idea of what this reason was I will have to look closely at that material in “New York, at first, did not see...” which deals with those sensitive issues of the public and business in art that had already so engaged the



editors of 291. Significantly, perhaps, de Zayas led off his essay with a feminine personification of the New York public, an entity which, as soon becomes clear, is a part of the formula that could make true artistic creation possible in the United States:

New York at first did not see. Afterward she did not want to see. Like a circumspect young girl or a careful married woman, she has taken all possible precautions against assimilating the spirit of modern art; rejecting a seed that would have found a most fertile soil.<sup>169</sup>

This public must, however, be stimulated if it is to accept the discoveries of modern art, a task that “American intellectuals” have not been able to accomplish:

They wish to impregnate you, believing themselves stallions when they are but geldings. They are not a product of their country. Their ideal does not reach beyond their personal interests.<sup>170</sup>

The reason that Stieglitz has also failed in his endeavours is that he has not been forceful enough in his dealings with the public:

He has put the American art public to the test. He has fought to change good taste into common sense. But he has not succeeded in putting in motion the enormous mass of this public’s self sufficiency. America has not the slightest conception of the value of the work accomplished by Stieglitz.<sup>171</sup>

Although de Zayas, in passages such as these, still showed himself to be of two minds in his opinion of the public, the importance of its active participation for the well-being of art, only implied in the article “Economic Laws and Art,” was here much more frankly acknowledged. De Zayas seemed finally to admit that the larger New York public must somehow be roused if art and “291” were to flourish in the United States.

In the essay, moreover, de Zayas also began to suggest that this task of awakening the public could only be accomplished by means of an involvement with business as it existed in America, although here, not surprisingly, he was more equivocal. Throughout much of the essay, in fact, de Zayas vigorously attacked the art business for promoting the reign of “those Sudras of progress - the copyists.” Business in general was, moreover, also blamed for infecting the art public with the attitudes of boosterism that caused it to ignore the quiet efforts of a Stieglitz:



America has not the slightest conception of the value of the work accomplished by Stieglitz. Success and success on a large scale, is the only thing that can make an impression on American mentality. Any effort, any tendency, which does not possess the radiation of advertising remains practically ignored.<sup>172</sup>

As in “Morituri te Salutant!!!...,” however, it is hard to establish exactly what de Zayas meant to say here, and the very variety of possible readings is perhaps itself revealing. Did he mean to condemn the public for understanding nothing but “success on a large scale?” Or, on the other hand, did he mean to fault Stieglitz for not making better use of “the radiation of advertising” in his promotional appeal to Americans? Was de Zayas perhaps suggesting that the machine drawings, which were explicitly based on advertisements, were an art that possessed some of this “radiating” power and, therefore had a chance of “success” in America?

That de Zayas was not unappreciative of American business successes becomes clear farther on in the essay, when he lauds American achievements in a variety of fields, including some that were blatantly “commercial”:

In politics, in industry, in science, in commerce, in finance, in the popular theatre, in architecture, in sport, in dress - from hat to shoes - the American has known how to get rid of European prejudices and has created in accordance with his own customs. But he has found himself powerless to do the same in art or literature... American artists have always had before them an inner censorship formed by an exotic education.<sup>173</sup>

De Zayas’ description of the “surroundings” that American artists were encouraged to approach with such decisiveness was similarly characterised by an admiration for the individualism and frenetic activity that were the distinguishing features of business culture:

One lives here in a continuous change which makes impossible the perpetuation and the universality of an idea. History in the United States is impossible and meaningless. One lives here in the present. In a continuous struggle to adapt oneself to the milieu....Each individual remains isolated, struggling for his own physical and intellectual existence. In the United States there is no general sentiment in any sphere of thought.<sup>174</sup>

Immediately following, de Zayas made a direct comparison between this turbulent state



of mind and modern art. "America," he asserted, "has the same complex mentality as the true modern artist."

The same eternal sequence of emotions, and sensibility to surroundings. The same continual need of expressing itself in the present and for the present; with joy in action, and with indifference to 'arriving.' For it is in action that America, like the true modern artist, finds its joy.<sup>175</sup>

Admittedly, de Zayas envisioned the American artist as resembling the consciousness of the great American "unconscious," or as an entity that would be able to express the more general state of mind. All the same, the relationship he postulated between artist and America appears to involve a considerable empathy and identification on the part of the artist with the subject at hand, as well as a marked similarity of spirit. It would seem, therefore that, even as de Zayas faulted business for hindering progress in art, he made room in the essay for a certain accommodation with its culture, suggesting that a business style or attitude might be necessary if modern art was to "succeed" in the United States. At the very least, de Zayas demonstrated an awareness that the production of art in America required a great deal of extroversion, a looking outward from art and from "291." This was an attitude that seems very similar to the extroversion that had also brought Picabia out of his inward looking, abstract period and caused him to take an interest in American machinery and advertising.<sup>176</sup>

Ultimately, the essay on Picabia and the significance of the machine-portraits for de Zayas had, I suspect, more to do with his own plans for "291" and art in America than with an American art as such. In a very interesting letter to Agnes Meyer, dated July 15, 1915, written after Picabia had arrived in New York and while he was working on the machine-drawings, de Zayas used some of the same language and imagery that appeared the essay, but did so in a way that was much more closely linked to the issue of business in art. The subject of the letter was, once again, the unfortunate state of inertia that "291" seemed still to be in, despite insiders' best remedial efforts by means of the magazine. Near the beginning of the letter, de Zayas again despaired of



Stieglitz and his methods, although this time he provided more details about what was wrong.

I don't think that Stieglitz at heart is really interested in taking any definite attitude or in doing any particular thing. And he cannot be blamed. Anything he tries to do costs him an awful lot of trouble and annoyance. So it is up to us, especially you and me, to suggest to him if not a program at least a tendency. I believe we owe that to him.<sup>177</sup>

De Zayas went on to review the recent history of "291," using words and images that were very similar to those he employed in the essay and explaining the role that 291 magazine had played:

Unconsciously we have brought 291 through our work in the paper 291 from the beautiful realm of the metaphysical to a field of practical action. 291 as a group has taken a very decided personality. We have begun to form the inside instead of remaining a receptive place, which had for a business to test the soul of others. In my opinion we cannot continue to keep up being a mystery, an enigma, an eternal spirit to ourselves and to others. We are now in a position in which we will be able to show to ourselves what we are, what we can do and what place we really deserve, not among our immediate neighbours but in the world at large and in the evolution of modern art.<sup>178</sup>

The "metaphysical," and the "eternal spirit" were here opposed to the "world at large," and "practical action" in much the same way that the essay had contrasted "American intellectuality" and "metaphysics" to "joy in action." In both letter and essay, moreover, de Zayas proclaimed himself opposed to inertia, and called for contact with the world in a forceful manner.

In his opinion, de Zayas wrote to Meyer, more exhibitions of modern art would not, by themselves, help to distinguish "291" from other New York galleries in a meaningful way:

Besides that work has already been done by Stieglitz in the Photo-S. with contrary results from what he expected. He tried to fight commercialism and it is commercialism which is now benefiting of [sic] all he has done, and as it always happens getting together to kill him or at least to nullify him. [sic]<sup>179</sup>

De Zayas then tentatively suggested that a more businesslike approach to art might be the answer to their problems:



At present it is in the power of Stieglitz to make of New York the world centre of the best elements of modern art. But to do it he would have to take a business attitude which for personal reasons and lack of capital he refuses to take.<sup>180</sup>

In the letter to Meyer the simultaneous condemnation and embrace of “business” that appeared in the essay on Picabia, was also present, but with more explanation.

Business in art, de Zayas implied here, was an evil that should be condemned when it was in the wrong hands, but could be something good, exciting and useful when undertaken in the proper spirit for the right cause by entities such as “291.” The ideas expressed here should, I believe, be understood as forming the context in which “New York, at first, did not see...” should be read. When looked at in terms of the letter, the essay constitutes a further justification by de Zayas for the adoption of frankly promotional methods, beyond the compromises with business that the editors had already made in 291 magazine.

These observations begin, I hope, to suggest the importance that the machine drawings held for de Zayas. Based on commercial advertisements and on that uniquely American monster, the machine, de Zayas seems to have found in Picabia’s new art a product of an alliance between art and business that was not tainted by the old “291” enemies, dishonesty, bad craftsmanship and philistinism. They seem to have been the visible proof that de Zayas needed to convince himself that something good could come out of America, and suggested that a further partnership between art and business was possible in other fields, perhaps even in the business of art itself. In many respects, the meaning that the machine-portraits held for de Zayas was not very different from their stated importance for Picabia. For both men these works embodied an escape from enclosed spaces, of art and gallery, where nothing important seemed to happen, out into the exciting world at large. But where, for Picabia, they symbolised the flight from Europe and the arrival at a new home, for de Zayas they represented an acceptance of the America in which he already lived. I suspect, moreover, that Picabia played a key



role for de Zayas in this process of accommodation. As a leading practitioner of the most advanced styles in art, his advice and example, like that of Apollinaire and other Europeans, carried great weight at “291.” When, in the past, Picabia had advocated an abstractionism of European origins, he had been heard with respect, and the response at “291” seems to have been equally strong when he suddenly adopted a machinist style and championed an “American” art. Picabia’s endorsement of work based on advertisements and the machine helped to legitimise for de Zayas the business culture that had been suspect at “291” for so long and thus took him farther along the road that would end in his going into business for himself. I suspect that de Zayas could not have arrived at this destination without Picabia’s example.

By the middle of August 1915, a month after the letter to Meyer was written, she and de Zayas were discussing between themselves the possibility of establishing a commercial branch of “291” that would have as its sole business the sale of art. That establishment, named the “Modern Gallery,” opened, with Stieglitz’s approval, at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street on October 9, 1915. Before I discuss the gallery and the issues of 291 associated with it, however, I want to go back and look at the sexual themes that figure so prominently in 291 and which were used to such effect in the “New York, at first, did not see...” essay.

## Sex

In this section of my thesis I want to look at that other conspicuous feature of 291, the prominent place occupied in many issues by work that makes use of sexual and generative imagery, and to show how this material was related to themes in the magazine that have already been discussed. I will examine some of the sources of this imagery, the structure of the sexual discourse in 291, and the use that was made of it within the context of the very specific situation in 1915. A careful examination of 291



reveals that both writers and artists often employed a related set of metaphors, most notably ones that centred around the sexual polarities outlined earlier in this chapter, to image a variety of concerns. Descriptions of love mating, and birth were employed to suggest other kinds of fulfilment and accomplishment, while images of sexual frustration, infertility and betrayal expressed more general forms of separation, incompletion and failure. Despite its diversity, the work in which this imagery appeared frequently concerned the creative act and its tribulations. Although such analogies between sex, birth and artistic creation were common in Romantic art theory, and thus hardly original to the “291” circle, the way in which the editors of 291 made use of these metaphors to rework their own ideas is somewhat less ordinary. As we shall see, this erotic discourse was extended to some of those issues relating to the public and business that so engrossed “291” insiders. Interestingly, sexual imagery was effectively used in 291 by artists and writers of both sexes. While I intend to examine work by both men and women in this one section, I will attempt to demonstrate the often subtle differences in outlook between their respective intellectual and aesthetic positions. Examination of work by women, in fact, often discloses a distinct critique of the male point of view.<sup>181</sup>

As we have seen, works that made use of sexual imagery were present in 291 magazine beginning with the very first issue. In that issue, items such as the poem “At the Arden Gallery” and the short article on Pascin had begun to eroticise the artist’s relationship with the city and with the art audience, while Alfred Stieglitz’s “One Hour’s Sleep --- Three Dreams” had laid out a distinct set of sexual polarities. Work that made more explicit use of such imagery, and or that focused specifically on relations between men and women, was, however, more in evidence only with the second issue, where, in fact, it seems to predominate. An untitled drawing by Katherine Rhoades that combined abstract forms with the “realistic” details of an ovum floating above and a sperm swimming below was reproduced, without further



explanation, on one of the inside pages [ Fig. 20].<sup>182</sup> “Mental Reactions,” the “visual poem” by Agnes Meyer and Marius de Zayas that recorded a complex and somewhat bitter encounter between the sexes appeared on the opposite page and was one of the first of several literary works to appear in 291 written from a woman’s perspective[Fig. 21].<sup>183</sup> Two poems by Katherine Rhoades published in subsequent issues, “I walked into a moment of greatness...” (No. 3) and “Flip Flap” (No. 4), both of which described the reactions of an audience member during concerts, again established a decidedly feminine point of view, and used language that had marked sexual overtones.<sup>184</sup> Issue No. 3 also contained yet another poem by Agnes Meyer, simply entitled “Woman,” that, like “Mental Reactions,” disclosed a woman’s state of mind by introspective means.<sup>185</sup> Sexual themes were, however, most prominent in the issues of 291 that were prepared during the summer of 1915. Francis Picabia’s “*Fille née sans mère*,” published in June (No.4) [Fig. 32], was followed in the July-August double issue (Nos. 5/6) by his “object-portraits” with their “*jeune fille Américaine dans l’état de nudité*,” and other slyly erotic references [Figs 33-37].<sup>186</sup> As we have already seen, the accompanying essay by Marius de Zayas employed a range of sexualised slander and innuendo in its attempts to put the drawings into perspective.<sup>187</sup> In the subsequent issue, Nos. 7/8, Picabia’s notion of the “daughter born without a mother” was then taken up by Paul Haviland to describe photography as a mating with the machine.<sup>188</sup> The last works with a conspicuous erotic content to appear in 291 were two “portraits” of a woman by Picabia and de Zayas, both of which made only slightly veiled references to sexual behavior and which were also characterised by a distinctly misogynistic streak [Figs. 43-44].<sup>189</sup>

Before I look at these works individually, or even before I discuss their sources in the Apollinaire circle and the earlier writings of the Stieglitz group, I want first to address the more general question of why the editors of 291 felt they had to include so



much erotically informed material in the first place. I believe that the answer has a great deal to do with the general intellectual and social climate in which the magazine was produced, and with the efforts of the editors to promote the “291” gallery with reference to it. In the United States, as elsewhere, the second decade of the twentieth century saw the substantial breakdown of Victorian strictures on the discussion and expression of sexuality, and also witnessed the emergence of a dynamic and broadly based women’s movement.<sup>190</sup> Although complete sexual freedom was advocated by only a minority of individuals, sex itself was the subject of excited debate in educated middle and upper class circles generally and no place more so than in cosmopolitan New York. Such topics as birth control, the easing of social restrictions on relations between the sexes, the presence of greater numbers of women who went and did as they pleased, and the preponderance of sexually suggestive material in the press and advertisements generated considerable discussion. “Even a casual exploration of the popular literature of the Progressive era,” writes historian James McGovern, “reveals that Americans then described and understood themselves to be undergoing significant changes in morals. ‘Sex o’clock in America’ struck in 1913, about the same time as ‘The Repeal of Reticence.’”<sup>191</sup> In July of 1914, *Puck*, the humorous weekly with which several “291” insiders were associated, and which was not above using quite rakish “pretty girl” covers to sell the magazine, parodied the modishness of sex in its own unique manner:

Once upon a time, to be exact it was sex days after Sexagesima, our sexdigitaile young heroine of sweet sexadecimal years pushed the sexfoil gum to the other side of her mouth and with a sexly breath of regret slapped down the cover on the last page of the great sex best seller: ‘Take Off Everything, or, A Sex Story of Sexangle Love.’<sup>192</sup>

In the metropolitan newspapers, issues such as birth control and women’s suffrage, both closely associated in the minds of contemporaries with the sexual “revolution,” received considerable exposure. In 1914 the subject of contraception had come to new prominence when birth control advocate Margaret Sanger fled the country rather than



face prosecution on charges of distributing “obscene” literature. When her husband was put on trial in her place, the newspaper coverage became even more intense.<sup>193</sup> The year 1915, moreover, also witnessed a hard fought, though unsuccessful, campaign for women’s suffrage in New York State that received a great deal of attention in the press. Several widely circulated magazines of socialist and liberal persuasions, including The Masses, The New Republic, as well as Puck, published special women’s or suffrage issues to mark the occasion.<sup>194</sup>

One of the more noticeable manifestations of the tendency towards greater sexual freedom was, in fact, underway just down the street from “291” in Greenwich Village, where “sex” carried implications that were especially attractive to gallery participants. Among Village radicals a conviction that strictures on sexual expression should be eased involved not only a rejection of prudery, but also a more general repudiation of outdated Victorian morals and manners. Greater individual fulfilment and happiness, as well as more amiable relations between the sexes and in society as a whole were among the results anticipated. Advocacy of birth control similarly carried with it wide social ramifications. Increased access to contraception, it was believed, would not only make sex itself less distressing, but would also relieve mothers from constant childbearing and lead to smaller, more manageable families. Perhaps most important for “291,” however, more artistically inclined radicals expected that greater openness in sexual matters and a relaxation of censorship laws would make possible a more honest art and literature. With a full range of language and experience at their disposal, artists and writers would be free to deal with any subject in the manner they thought best.<sup>195</sup>

Because the sexual revolution and the modern art movement could be seen as part of the same rebellion against obsolete and authoritarian standards, an intellectual alliance between “291” and Greenwich Village was a natural one. Not surprisingly,



then, Villagers and other radicals who advocated greater sexual freedom, such as Hutchins Hapgood, and even Emma Goldman, were frequent visitors at the gallery, and material that endorsed openness in sexual matters appeared in Camera Work from quite an early date. Sadakichi Hartmann's essays on the nude and on Puritanism, published in 1910 and 1911, for example, were both a critique of a society that seemed habitually to divide mind and body and a call for greater honesty in art. In "Puritanism, Its Grandeur and Shame," Hartmann deplored the fact that

in painting, scarcely a breath of the great passions is palpable. In literature there is much pretence, but no deep thought of lofty imagination, and trace of realistic truth. The painter does not dare to paint a nude. The writer is afraid of writing a realistic love story. The artist as well as the public bear the troubled conscience of sinners....

And as long as we...sit in snow up to our navels, and torment ourselves with conscientious scruples we will have no candour, no fire and dash in any intellectual act.<sup>196</sup>

Hutchins Hapgood's "In Memoriam," published in the July 1912 issue, forged a similar link between an absence of prudery and excellence in art, moving quickly from youth and innocence to the nude.<sup>197</sup>

Although the treatment of such themes by 291 was generally more cursory and more sensationalistic than the earnest discussions characteristic of Camera Work, some of the same connections between art and wider social issues were made in that magazine as well. References to sexual matters in 291 were of two kinds. The first involved direct comment on controversial social questions by the short articles published as a monthly feature. One of the most interesting of these, entitled "Motherhood a Crime" from No. 2, which has already been mentioned, asked why the incidents of a girl's suicide following an illegitimate pregnancy should be so briefly noted in the newspapers. The article concluded with a call to action:

We go to see Brieux's Maternity at the theatre. We applaud and adjourn to the the dansant. When it comes to the test what do we do?<sup>198</sup>

The play referred to, Maternity by the French writer Eugène Brieux, which had been



banned in London a few years before, severely condemned such modern outrages as men's rights in marriage, the absence of access to birth control, as well as the stigma attached to illegitimacy.<sup>199</sup> Publication of this article by 291 signalled not only an approval by the editors of the liberal opinions expressed by Brieux but, somewhat surprisingly, also had the effect of suggesting that "art" alone was not a sufficient response to these issues. An unpublished number of 291, preserved in the form of dummies in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., that was to have appeared in July of 1915, seems to have similarly been intended to align the magazine with the larger causes of social and sexual freedom.<sup>200</sup> Two pages of this issue were to have consisted of drawings by Abraham Walkowitz of the dancer Isadora Duncan, widely regarded as a living symbol of free bodily and artistic expression, in the act of performing [Figs. 29, 30]. Another page was to have reproduced Walkowitz's drawing of a (female) idol-like figure [Fig. 31] with the attached inscription:

Marriage without license  
Religion without god.

Taken together, the two parts of the unpublished issue suggested that a "primitive" spontaneity in art, represented by Duncan, and an absence of social-sexual prohibitions, embodied in the idol with inscription, were one and the same thing. Although such sentiments were hardly new to "291," they had never before been so publicly proclaimed, nor so thoroughly connected with the spirit of modern art.<sup>201</sup> Once again, plans to publish this material seem to indicate a conviction, on the part of the editors, that art must move beyond itself and forge links with something outside the world of theatres and galleries. It is significant, however, that the issue was not, in fact, released, a decision that may have been influenced by a fear that 291, and "291," were moving too far from their bases in the artistic avant-garde.<sup>202</sup>

Most references in 291 to social-sexual issues, however, were not made in the form of such direct comments, but appeared in the guise of the sexually suggestive, but



rather ambiguous, allusions in Picabia's machine portraits and Rhoades' abstract drawing, or the loud, but hardly socially relevant, sexual rhetoric of de Zayas' "New York, at first, did not see...." Much of the other work published in 291, moreover, while not sexually explicit, seemed also to identify the magazine with the easing of Victorian morality and a growing sophistication in sexual matters. The encounter depicted in "Mental Reactions," for example, dealt with relations between the sexes, rather than sex itself, but did so in a quite unabashed and worldly manner. Such material, as well the large amount of writing in 291 on the subject of women, seems to have been included with an eye to contemporary social trends and to have been intended to draw attention to the monthly by its controversial nature.<sup>203</sup> The use of erotic work for the purpose of publicity seems, in fact, to have been quite common in the period and even to have had some precedents at "291" itself. Not only had work advocating greater sexual freedom already been published in Camera Work, but some of the very first exhibitions of modern art at the gallery appear to have been arranged in the expectation that the art audience would be shocked by the explicit nature of the work shown. In his memoir of this period, "How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York," written in the late 1940s, de Zayas noted that some of these pioneering exhibits at "291," notably those of nude drawings by Rodin and Matisse [Fig. 39], had made an impact in New York as much for their alleged obscenity as for their vagaries of style.<sup>204</sup> As evidence, de Zayas provided a review by J. N. Laurvik that appeared in the New York Times in April of 1908:

The exhibition of drawings by Rodin at the little galleries of the Photo-Secession, 291 Fifth Avenue, is of unusual artistic and human interest. It is also a challenge to the prurient prudery of our puritanism. As one looks at these amazing records of unabashed observations of an artist who is also a man, one marvels that this little gallery has not long since been raided by the police.<sup>205</sup>

Similar observations were made by critics on the occasion of the first exhibits of Matisse's work.<sup>206</sup> Commenting on this kind of criticism, de Zayas alleged that Stieglitz and Steichen had, in fact, been perfectly aware of what they were doing and



that he himself approved of their methods:

Steichen must have seen in [Rodin's drawings] all the elements needed to stir up things in New York. And they did. With this exhibition the Photo-Secession became the key which opened the doors of New York to modern art.

It was, indeed, very wise of Steichen and Stieglitz to have started their art exhibitions with such drawings - the Photo Secession was put on the map as a radical, educational and immoral institution.<sup>207</sup>

I suspect that the appearance of sexually informed work in 291 magazine may, in fact, have been a deliberate attempt to emulate these methods, which had been noticeably absent from Camera Work in recent years as that periodical tried to sort out issues of abstraction in art. As early as 1913 de Zayas, perhaps with these early shows in mind, expressed a desire to create a similar sensation with an exhibition of erotic art at "291." In a letter to Stieglitz written in September of that year, he related that he had just attended two performances of quite risqué plays, but that they had been calmly received by the audience. He continued:

I believe the time has come for the Secession to have the erotic art show you have in mind. If you don't do it now maybe next season will be too late. New York is growing rapidly.<sup>208</sup>

291 magazine seems, in part, to have been an attempt to hold, in a perhaps milder form, that erotic art show.<sup>209</sup>

While the sexualised material in 291 was, as a whole, meant to draw attention to the magazine by its controversial nature, the particular kind of imagery used seems, however, also to have been intended to invoke a particular sexual and generative discourse that had recently been employed in the Stieglitz circle, and that the editors of 291 wanted to engage. By 1915, thinking about art in the generative, if not explicitly sexually, terms that the "291" group had taken over from late Romanticism, had, in fact, become almost endemic at the gallery.<sup>210</sup> As has already been noted, in the "What '291' means to me" issue of Camera Work, contributions to which summarised current thinking about the gallery, the slow progress of the "291"'s influence in the world was



likened to the growth of a plant, and the female birth function appropriated to describe artistic creation. Stieglitz himself was frequently characterised as the “Midwife of Souls,” a sort of catalyst that could bring art and ideas into life.<sup>211</sup> In Camera Work as a whole, the especial proponent of this generative idiom was Benjamin de Casseras, a New York critic responsible for some of the purplest prose to appear in the quarterly. An excerpt from an article by Casseras on Eduard Steichen, published in 1910, gives some idea of how vast the concept of generation could become:

We go toward ourselves. My images and thoughts are eggs. I enwomb and unwomb myself. I have infinities, eternities, nadirs, zeniths, boxed in my brain. I am always delivering myself to myself, cannot possibly forsake myself, cannot possibly exist in the world - seeing that the world exists in me....<sup>212</sup>

A similarly Promethean conception of art and “291” characterised the “Means to Me” issue, where Katherine Rhoades, the future contributor to 291 magazine, allowed herself excesses that equalled Casseras’ in her evocation of the gallery:

Day after day of supreme effort builded it,  
And upon day and night a sense of sound  
Whirling - as of a million elements up-gathering  
Centuries away - into present truth.  
A Spirit - held by human workers - holding them -  
Driving, beyond man’s death, a force unto greater life  
Endlessly creating.<sup>213</sup>

Use of these kinds of sexual and generative metaphors allowed “291” artists and theorists to think of their work as unaffected, inevitable, and as powerful as nature itself. This imagery also had the added advantage that it could be put to a large number of uses. Although connected in a general way with “vitality” and “creativity,” generative imagery had a free floating currency among writers of the Stieglitz circle that allowed it to be enlisted in the service of almost any cause, including that of advanced art. Thus, in 1913, Oscar Bluemner was able to employ the language of fertility in his explanation of the importance of the Armory Show:

The International Exhibition of Modern art has become a fact in the life of the United States. That life has already spontaneously developed a germ of art. That germ could not but be fertilised by the progressive spirit of European culture, a culture in which the United States is fully a generation behind.<sup>214</sup>



Then, in 1913 and 1914, almost as if in reply to Bluemner, very similar metaphors were used by John Weichsel to disparage these same developments. Because Weichsel's aims were censorious, however, he found it necessary to add infertility and impotence to the sexual equation. For Weichsel, avant-garde experiment was not evidence of new life, but "a logical miscarriage," and "a deformed growth and an abortive outcome." "How did this sterile bud," he asked, "come to bloom on the glorious tree of the 19th century's art, that meant to synthesize all virile and quintessential matter in its Cezannesque force."<sup>215</sup> The same sort of imagery was employed in Weichsel's other essays with a similar intent.

I suspect that the editors of 291, aware that generative metaphors had been used in this manner by Weichsel and other conservative critics, decided to reverse the poles of this imagery once again and apply its positive side to the avant-garde work they themselves admired. Thus, where Weichsel had employed organic metaphors to describe a relatively traditional art, and the relationship he believed it to have with a racial consciousness, writers in 291 used the same sort of language with reference to art that was difficult, experimental, and whose models were often mechanical. In contrast to the images of budding plants, pregnant artists, and so on, offered to readers by the "Means to Me" issue, 291 contained bizarre items such as de Zayas' essay on the machine portraits, where advanced art was shown to be the product of fertile coupling between artist and the American city. De Zayas even saw fit to hurl Weichsel's own epithet, "infertile," at those who he thought had prevented the emergence of a modern, urban art in the United States.<sup>216</sup> Paul Haviland, in his essay on photography for Nos. 7-8, went even further to valorise the "artificial" art of the machine above all other kinds of creation:

MAN MADE THE MACHINE IN HIS OWN IMAGE....THE MACHINE IS HIS 'DAUGHTER BORN WITHOUT A MOTHER.' THAT IS WHY HE LOVES HER. HAVING MADE HER SUPERIOR TO HIMSELF, HE ENDOWS THE SUPERIOR BEINGS WHICH HE CONCEIVES IN HIS



POETRY AND IN HIS PLASTIQUE WITH THE QUALITIES OF MACHINES....THROUGH THEIR MATING THEY COMPLETE ONE ANOTHER. SHE BRINGS FORTH ACCORDING TO HIS CONCEPTIONS.<sup>217</sup>

Haviland and other writers in 291 seem to have developed a reproductive symbolism that magnificently suited the urban, seemingly deracinated art they admired. Their appropriation of the organic imagery used by Weichsel had the effect of rationalising and empowering this strange new art, thus making it, and not the art of the conservatives, seem the wave of the future.

Although the sexual metaphors employed in 291 magazine were mobilised to meet such practical exigencies as the war with the conservatives, the inspiration for the use of this imagery, and the particular structure that it possessed, appears to have had yet another source as well. During the summer of 1914, Marius de Zayas was, as we have seen, in almost daily contact with Guillaume Apollinaire and his circle, the members of which frequently made use of the same erotic language that later made its appearance in 291, and it is thus probable that there was considerable influence on the “291” circle from France. Although de Zayas seems to have been the artist and critic most influenced in this regard, the work of Katherine Rhoades and Agnes Meyer, both of whom were also in France during the summer of that year, was probably affected as well.<sup>218</sup>

Sex was an aspect of Apollinaire’s work and life more important to him than any other except, perhaps, writing itself, and he made frequent use of generative imagery, including the notion of unaided birth, to describe the creative act. In his critical work, Les Peintres Cubistes, published in 1913, for example, Pablo Picasso was introduced as a sort of divine semiotician of art:

A new man, the world is his new representation. He enumerates the elements, the details, with a brutality which is also able to be gracious. New born, he orders the universe in accordance with his personal requirements, and so as to formulate his relations with his fellows.<sup>219</sup>



Apollinaire was also very fond of obscene literature. The editor of a series of “forbidden books,” in 1914 he even produced two pornographic volumes of his own for quick cash. Sex in its more extreme forms was for him one of the great appetites of the artist, an act of will comparable to artistic creation, and something that set the artist apart from the rest of society.<sup>220</sup> More broadly, sex was a requirement for successful work, and women were constantly in Apollinaire’s life playing the roles of companion and muse. From 1910, the object of his desire in this regard was Marie Laurencin who, to his great disappointment, then left him in 1912.<sup>221</sup> Apollinaire took sexual betrayal badly, and such an incident usually brought out a misogynist streak in him that was reflected in his work. Scott Bates, an authority on the poet, sums up this aspect of Apollinaire’s art and life as follows:

His lifelong quest could be termed the desire and pursuit of the whole....Eros was the connecting link between the two separate unities of man and woman....When as it recurrently happened, Eros turned into Anteros and led the poet to a woman of straw, he substituted for her other animae of his inner vision, revolution, nature, memory, the Muse, the Madonna, Eve, will, desire, and the modern world - or, in his nihilistic, onanistic works, himself, Lilith, the bitch-goddess, or a fatal illusion.<sup>222</sup>

Among the artists and writers associated with Apollinaire, Francis Picabia seems to have had a very similar outlook on women and sex. Another divided man, Picabia claimed to have a great need for both, but, because these desires interfered with his pretensions to artistic omniscience, simultaneously resented the fact that he was so chained to them and it. A fascination and frustration with sex ran through much of his work, including the abstract paintings that had been displayed at “291” early in 1915, where pensive-looking, male forms appeared threatened by hard, devouring female ones [Fig. 16].<sup>223</sup> Picabia’s biographer, William Camfield remarks, with reference to this work:

Then and later on those themes revealed a man who sometimes viewed himself as a passive victim of sex, but was more often burdened by an insatiable appetite for woman as mother, muse and mistress...the conditions of his personal life were transformed into abstract compositions suggestive of more



universal longings, frustration and despair.<sup>224</sup>

The sexual obsessions of these men converged when, in the summer of 1914, Apollinaire, Picabia, de Zayas and the composer Albert Savinio, collaborated on a pantomime entitled “A quelle heure un train partira-t-il pour Paris?” only Apollinaire’s script for which was ever completed.<sup>225</sup> A sort of simultanist tableau based on Apollinaire’s poem “Le musicien de Saint-Merry,” the pantomime, which was to have been performed in New York the following year, had a very marked sexual content. According to Willard Bohn, in the poem

one is...confronted with a grandiose sexual fantasy on the part of Apollinaire in which a personification of his own sexual member plays the starring role, an example of phallic narcissism translated into artistic terms.<sup>226</sup>

Both poem and pantomime were, in fact, pervaded by that sense of frustration and loss that characterised other works of the Apollinaire group and that later made its appearance in 291 magazine.<sup>227</sup> At one level, both works were about Apollinaire’s recent separation from Laurencin, and the end of the pantomime, where the faceless man, the penis, leads a whole assembly of women to their deaths, constituted an act of metaphoric revenge on her.<sup>228</sup> Participation in this collaboration seems to have made a deep impression on de Zayas. At some time, probably in 1914, he made a note on his copy of the script that recorded its significance for him, and which is worth quoting in full:

Je pense souvent à ce malheureux que l’amour a banni de son royaume et qui, poussé par les commandements de la nature, cherche éternellement la consolation de ses maux dans la satisfaction de ses désirs barrés. Et je bénis le bordel car c’est le baume des blessures de ce grand crucifié qui s’appelle l’homme. Je pense souvent aux femmes indigentes qui sont enceintes, qui n’auront pas de lit pour accoucher de l’être qui leur déchire le ventre. Et je bénis les maisons de maternité car elles sont le baume des blessures de cette grande douloiresque qui s’appelle l’femme. Et je pense aussi qu’il y a des cerveaux qui sont bannis de la joie de vivre parce qu’ils ne sont pas compris. Car la compréhension c’est la cohabitation de deux cerveaux.

(I often think of that sad individual whom love has banished from his kingdom and who, responding to nature’s commands, eternally seeks



consolation for his misfortune in the satisfaction of his thwarted desires. And I bless the brothel, for it is balm to the wounds of that great crucified being known as man. I often think of poor women who are pregnant, who will have no bed in which to give birth to the creature who is tearing at their belly. And I bless the maternity hospital, for they are balm to the wounds of that long suffering being known as woman. And I also think there are some minds that are banished from life's joy because they are not understood. For understanding is the cohabitation of two minds.)<sup>229</sup>

For de Zayas, it was apparently men alone who possessed an active sexual principle, while women only gave birth, passively. For both sexes, however, de Zayas foresaw enslavement, frustration and pain as the inevitable consequences of sex. Bohn, in his book on the pantomime, comments:

For [de Zayas] the faceless man symbolised the masculine condition, driven by a sexual desire that he succeeded only rarely in satisfying. It is evident that this interpretation approximated Apollinaire's own response. In both cases it was a question of a phallic individual who was obsessed with the sex act.<sup>230</sup>

In his note de Zayas also made that metaphoric connection between sexual fulfilment and intellectual "understanding" that seems to have been so common among these artists and writers. Sex and the creative act were for him closely related and were capable of imaging one another.

291 magazine, which appeared less than six months after de Zayas returned from France, was replete with images, narratives and works of art that recalled Apollinaire, Picabia and the side of de Zayas revealed in the note. Earlier in this chapter I discussed certain works published in the first issue and suggested that they laid out a clear set of sexual polarities. In light of what is known about de Zayas' collaboration with Apollinaire and Picabia, it seems likely that the use of these polarities in the magazine to image themes of fulfilment and loss also reflects the influence of similar treatments by members of the Apollinaire circle. This use of erotic imagery, although present in No. 1, was, however, more unmistakably introduced in No. 2, with the untitled drawing by Katherine Rhoades of an ovum and sperm seemingly sundered by a mass of abstract shapes that bear a strong resemblance to female reproductive



organs [Fig. 20].<sup>231</sup> No explanation was provided in 291 or elsewhere for this enigmatic work, and it is probable that the drawing had a deeply personal meaning for the artist. At one level, the work may have constituted a veiled comment on Rhoades' relationship with Stieglitz, who was in love with her at the time, but in whom she was not interested sexually.<sup>232</sup> Narrow interpretations are unwise, however, for union and separation were the positive and negative poles of Rhoades' poetic universe as well, and in her poetry she made use of similar images in a variety of contexts (see for example her contribution to the "Means to Me" issue, quoted above). Douglas Hyland has suggested that Rhoades' untitled work may have some relation to "The Strike of the Uterus," a charcoal drawing by de Zayas produced about 1915, that shows a skeletal hand preventing copulation [Fig. 40]. Hyland speculates that the untitled work may, in fact, have replaced de Zayas' "Strike..." in 291 magazine, and that both may illustrate the short article, "Motherhood a Crime," that appeared in the same issue.<sup>233</sup> Whatever their functional relationship, all three of these works were clearly about some sort of proscription, of sex and birth, but also of fulfilment, at the personal, artistic and social levels. Rhoades' and de Zayas' depiction of a failure of sexual relations could, in fact, illustrate the note that de Zayas made on the script of "A Quelle heure un train partira-t-il pour Paris?"

The same issue of 291 that reproduced the untitled abstract also published de Zayas' and Meyer's visual poem "Mental Reactions," which, as we have seen, recorded a woman's thoughts during a flirtatious encounter at a fashionable New York party [Fig. 21].<sup>234</sup> Although the poem as a whole was a collaboration, Meyer was probably responsible for the text, while the layout was most likely the work of de Zayas. Like the Rhoades untitled, "Mental Reactions" seems also to have had a private meaning for Meyer that resists full disclosure.<sup>235</sup> Separation was, once again, one of the major themes of the poem, not only between the sexes, but within the self as well.



As has been noted, the authors' use of a simultanist-like style allowed them to set out a number of varied and often contradictory statements without direct authorial comment, a technique that was used effectively to image a state of intense self-division.<sup>236</sup>

Although only the woman's thoughts are recorded, it appears, in fact, that the man in the poem does most of the talking during the encounter, leaving the woman somewhat overwhelmed. His masculine self-confidence leads her to infer that he speaks from a "greater experience," a conclusion that causes her to question herself and condemn her own womanly reticence:

He is telling me this...  
to find out whether I have dared to live....

How can he bear to speak of it if it was real to him?...

Ah, there you go, sitting in judgment from the personal point of view. He has the ability to give his very self.  
Be big enough to accept whatever is given you....

Odd. He gives me all he has to give.  
I think about myself.<sup>237</sup>

For the woman the encounter seems to prove that while the man can "give" of his "very self," she is unable to escape her own self-devouring thoughts, and can only "FLIRT" with life.<sup>238</sup> Ultimately, however, she is unable to continue in the submissive and silent role prescribed for her within their brief relationship. She comes to realise that the man is only using her to perfect his "experience," and that she is "nothing but his introduction to himself."<sup>239</sup> Hesitantly, she also comes to the conclusion that her self-questioning is, in fact, part of her own feminine experience. Eventually she flees the stifling encounter:

I feel him making a mental note:

"Experiment No. 987

Reaction perfect"

Why do we all object to being the lowest human common denominator?

I really must go -



Whenever I pass that canvas I want to put my foot through it.

Good. It's still running.

I shall be in time for a last romp. Coward? Common human denominator? Who cares?<sup>240</sup>

“Mental Reactions” is part of a larger critique of the male creative economy undertaken by women members of the group in the pages of 291 magazine. Works such as these appear, in fact, to present a view from the other side of that masculine fixation on women that found them necessary for personal and artistic affirmation. Meyer implied here that these kinds of relationships, even as they provided a degree of satisfaction for the men involved, left their female participants frustrated and self-divided. For women, these encounters seemed to pose a threat of personal annihilation as their individuality was subsumed within men’s “greater experience”. Meyer suggested that, for women, “union” could be as dangerous a state as “separation.”<sup>241</sup>

One question that might be asked about “Mental Reactions” is whether de Zayas, the male party in the collaboration, understood what Meyer was trying to do in the poem, and whether he brought his own masculine perspective to the work. Because de Zayas was responsible for its silent, visual elements, firm conclusions concerning his opinions are hard to draw. De Zayas did, however, have the opportunity of manipulating Meyer’s text, and his additions do, in fact, suggest that he considered the woman’s reflections to be just so much self-indulgence. Not only did he emphasise those parts of the poem, such as perfume and chocolate box labels, that were indicative of narcissistic pleasure, but also words such as “**MYSELF**” and “**FLIRT**” that suggest the woman was basically uninterested in the man, and only in herself. I would speculate that de Zayas either did not appreciate the complexity of the poem, or that he chose to read it as merely critical of the feminine character. I would also suggest that he interpreted the poem within the framework of desire and frustration that he had set out in his pantomime note. From a male point of view “Mental Reactions” can, in fact, be



read as a description of a relationship that is sexually unfulfilling and thus symbolic of the frustration suffered by “that great crucified being known as man.”<sup>242</sup>

Two long poems by Katherine Rhoades published in the early issues of 291 also dealt with women’s responses to male “genius.” The first of these, which begins “I walked into a moment of greatness...,” appeared in No. 3, together with a poem by Meyer on another page laid out by de Zayas.<sup>243</sup> The other, “Flip-Flap,” was situated opposite Picabia’s drawing “*Fille née sans mère*” in No. 4.<sup>244</sup> Both these poems recollected the thoughts and feelings of a (female) member of the audience during concerts, and were therefore further additions to that protracted discussion of the public that had its origins in Camera Work. Rhoades’ poems were unique, however, in that they approached the issue from the public’s point-of-view. The two poems seem to be in deliberate contrast. While “I walked into a moment of greatness...” describes a transcendence of self brought about by aesthetic experience, “Flip-Flap” is about a complete breakdown of communication between artist and audience. “I walked into...” takes place during a performance of Wagner’s opera, “*Die Meistersinger*, an experience that so overpowers the writer that she feels

Everything had merged - there was no possibility of any retention of the separateness of a human self from the space of sound into which that sentient self had projected. An extension of feeling and a diffusion of music with it - creating a condition of oneness. A passing of each into the other.<sup>245</sup>

Something is created during the encounter, and Rhoades’ language becomes almost erotic:

Something greater than ourselves was breathing. What gave it the impetus to breathe? And if it could have endured - if a climax could have been reached and held for the fraction of a second - would not that instant have become infinite? Would it have been death? Or an escape - into a quickening of life?<sup>246</sup>



Whereas Rhoades' untitled drawing had pictured separation, this poem anticipated a kind of ecstatic union. It was also a description of a kind of artistic fulfilment available to the public, here itself made into a work of art.

In the other poem, "Flip-Flap," nothing at all is created. Attending another concert, Rhoades can see only fake emotion being produced by the performer and smug self-satisfaction on the part of the audience:

A man at a piano - thousands assembled, close, elbows touching,  
Waiting,  
Manufactured Soul-stuff for those who dare not  
create -  
Come and have your emotions played upon!  
You like to suffer - so?...<sup>247</sup>

Rhoades, however, is not a passive member of the public. She objects to the manipulation of emotion that gives the pianist such complete control, and leaves to the audience only the role of "sounding boards." For her, the concert seems intended only to serve as a temporary narcotic for those tired with life, a purpose that inhibits genuine transcendence. It is

...this orgie .... this maze of sound and tensity -  
- where tuned-up Beauty flatters some few hundred humans, and  
lends them a vitality for this infected Now.<sup>248</sup>

Like the woman in "Mental Reactions," however, Rhoades rebels at the oppressive relationship, and the structures that allow it to exist. She feels "stifled - done for," and realises that if anything is to be saved from this mess she will have to break out laughing:

Out into this sea of dreadful stutterings I'd throw an inversion -  
a revision....<sup>249</sup>

This alone might lead to transcendence:

A Whole Self - laughing -  
Yes, all - only my body dead - left here -  
Flip-Flap -<sup>250</sup>

Unfortunately, she is held back by a sense of "devastating repression," and "Flip-Flap"



ends on a note of frustration.<sup>251</sup> What is remarkable about the poem, however, is that in it Rhoades questions the importance of a type of creation coded as “genius,” and the public arena that gives it authorisation. Like “Mental Reactions,” moreover, this poem again suggested that self-doubt and disappointed yearnings could have a value in themselves, and might constitute a variety of feminine experience.

Work by women was absent from 291 after the publication of issue No. 4 in June of 1915, and did not reappear until the very last number. Significantly, perhaps, the social conscience signalled by “Motherhood a Crime” and the unpublished issue also fell by the way at this time. There were undoubtedly some good practical reasons for these changes. In June of that year, Agnes Meyer was in the last stages of pregnancy and in the following months caring for a new baby left her unable to continue participating fully in the magazine’s production.<sup>252</sup> Katherine Rhoades, the other woman member of the circle, who had been not as thoroughly involved with 291 to begin with, appears to have spent more of her time at the family home in Massachusetts beginning in the summer of 1915.<sup>253</sup> I suspect, however, that there were also some more sinister reasons for the sudden disappearance of work by women from 291. June, 1915 was also the month in which arch avant-gardist and mechanophile, Francis Picabia, returned to New York. On his arrival he and de Zayas again formed a close personal and professional relationship, and Picabia became, in effect, another editor of 291.<sup>254</sup> Picabia, of course, had a rather ambivalent attitude toward women that bordered on misogyny, and cannot have been impressed by the presence of so much of their work in the magazine. It is very likely, therefore, that he was at least partly responsible for the change in editorial direction.<sup>255</sup> Some evidence of changing attitudes at “291” does, in fact, exist in the voluminous correspondence between Katherine Rhoades and Alfred Stieglitz preserved at Yale University. In a letter dated July 10, 1915, Rhoades noted that she had not felt very welcome at the gallery



during her last visit, and speculated about the reasons:

Of course I noticed that both you + de Z. were very quiet - that he [de Zayas] didn't seem particularly interested in ~~in~~ our silliness - ...preferred Picabia's ear above - and his witticisms.<sup>256</sup>

On July 30, 1915 Rhoades also expressed an unfavourable opinion of the machine-drawings, which had just then been published. "To me they are like intensely clever advertisements," she wrote to Stieglitz. "They advertise, or express - Picabia - more than they do 291...."<sup>257</sup> She also declared herself to be "delighted to see what the jeune fille Américaine is to him - it is illuminating!"<sup>258</sup> I suspect that from June 1915 on, de Zayas and Picabia, with the possible cooperation of Meyer, decided to devote 291 more exclusively to advanced art of a brash and rather extroverted kind. A corollary to this change in editorial direction seems to have been the exclusion of extended pieces of introspective analysis, such as "Mental Reactions" and "Flip Flap," as well as of work that hinted at a social conscience. Women's writing seems to have been acceptable only as long as it gave the magazine a certain flair, and was discarded when something more exciting came along in the form of Picabia.<sup>259</sup>

Picabia's drawing, "Fille née sans mère," reproduced in issue No. 4 [Fig. 32], was the first example to appear in 291 of a masculine art of omniscience that seemed to exclude women as a matter of necessity. The title of this strange work, which combined organic and mechanical forms, implied both that the machine-being portrayed was a new form of life created by man without the aid of "mother" nature, and that the work of art in which it appeared was itself the product of a similarly autonomous birth. The idea of machines as the superior creations of men had long held a fascination for European artists and writers such as Villiers, Huysmans, Jarry and others associated with the Symbolist movement. These writers, with whom the members of the Stieglitz circle were probably familiar, also habitually described machines as female, attempting in this way to express their deep affection for them.<sup>260</sup>



In his work, Picabia seems to have combined his knowledge of these sources with his own mania for mechanisation, recently reinforced by his experience of America, to create works such as the “*Fille née sans mère*.<sup>261</sup> Although his machine drawings appear, superficially, to border on non-art, the idea of the “*fille née sans mère*” that they embodied in fact made the very highest claims for both art and artist. The phrase implied that the (male) artist required no help from sources outside himself in the production of art, except, perhaps, from his fellow creators, the engineers.<sup>262</sup> Notably, relations with a female principle were not necessary for the creator of machine art, outside of the love affair he conducted with his own mechanical daughters. The sexual relations posited by such work were thus essentially incestuous and described a condition of masculine self-containment. Needless to say, living female companions, even for the purposes of “inspiration” or “experiment,” were superfluous to this relationship and were, in fact, inimical to it, as they represented something from outside the circuit of independent creation. In this mechanical philosophy, women’s special province, the birth function, was, of course, also entirely taken over by the male artist.<sup>263</sup>

The machine portraits reproduced in the summer double issue of 291 were a further development of this “*fille née sans mère*” theme [Figs. 33-37]. Here, however, Picabia presented somewhat more magnificent creations, the products of his love affair with America, smooth and hard as the machines he admired. While these works should, I believe, be understood as yet another attempt by Picabia to gain power and omniscience by means of an artistic interface with the machine, they were, as I have shown in the previous section, not without satirical elements that undercut these pretensions to omnipotence. On the one hand, Picabia demonstrated a desire to make himself and his friends even stronger and more American by means of mechanical analogies. Picabia himself was therefore represented as a phallic-looking automobile



horn [Fig. 34], while Agnes Meyer, as we have seen, was depicted as the American super-flirt, confident in her nudity [Fig. 35]. On the other hand, certain of the individuals portrayed were shown to be flawed, and their defects, like their virtues, were imaged in sexual and mechanical terms. Dickran Tashjian has noted, for example, that the collapsed camera bellows in the portrait of Stieglitz resembles a limp penis, in what is probably another reference to Stieglitz's impotence as an exhibitor [Fig. 33].<sup>264</sup> Marius de Zayas, another artist with pretensions to creative omniscience, was portrayed as a machine that required some sort of sexual stimulus to function properly [Fig. 36]. These particular portraits seem to speak of a certain frustration, both sexual and otherwise, on the part of these machine-persons, not unlike that described by de Zayas in the note on the pantomime script. They also demonstrate an awareness on Picabia's part that perfect creation out of nothing is, in fact, an impossibility.

De Zayas' essay on the machine-portraits, however, like other rhetoric on "machine daughters" in 291, largely ignores these satirical elements to read these works as symbols of power. For de Zayas, Picabia's mechanical works were, as we have seen, an authentic American art that he hoped might, by force of example, return artistic endeavour in the United States to its proper course. Picabia, de Zayas concluded, had looked without prejudice at his immediate surroundings to produce an art that faithfully reflected American life. In order to drive home these points about Picabia, de Zayas made use of an abundance of sexual innuendo and erotic metaphor that seems to draw on the "tradition" of such sexual usages that had been established by 291, and that was present, in a somewhat milder form, in Camera Work as well. What de Zayas now did was to combine the familiar language of sexual longing and fulfilment with the discussion of the American public to produce a powerful, if rather coarse-minded, synthesis. In the essay, de Zayas took a decidedly masculine point of view of the issues at hand, identifying artists and artistic promoters as the vessels of a male virility that could make things happen for art in America.<sup>265</sup> The American public, that necessary



partner in the production of art, was, moreover, consistently feminised, and its indifference to modern work pictured as frigidity :

New York, at first, did not see. Afterward she did not want to see. Like a circumspect young girl or a careful married woman, she has taken all possible precautions against assimilating the spirit of modern art; rejecting a seed that would have found a most fertile soil.<sup>266</sup>

The male partner in the relationship, the “American intellectual,” was, of course, also to blame for this failure, and de Zayas used a language of sexual dysfunction to image his shortcomings. Preoccupation with foreign ideas, he concluded, had rendered American intellectuals infertile with their own kind:

They believe themselves to have a luminous mission; but their light dazzles the eyes instead of illuminating. They wish to impregnate you, believing themselves stallions when they are but geldings. They are not a product of their country.<sup>267</sup>

More generally, de Zayas indiscriminately labelled all tendencies he rejected as “homosexual,” “infertile,” and “gelded,” using, as has already been noted, John Weichsel’s terminology but with an almost opposite intent. These sexual insults served not only to denigrate the opposition, but also had the effect of further masculinising Picabia by force of contrast.

The challenge for American art, as de Zayas saw it, was to overcome the public’s inhibiting shyness and artists’ lack of ardour and get these two parties into bed with one another. Much of the groundwork for the mechanics of this desired relationship had, of course, been laid in earlier issues of 291. The separation of artist and public that de Zayas deplored is, in fact, reminiscent of both the distance between male and female principles in Rhoades’ untitled drawing and the interrupted flirtation in “Mental Reactions.” More resonant still, however, are those pieces in the magazine that deal explicitly with the audience and the public. As early as the “Simultanist” poem in No. 1 made up of the conversation of women, 291 magazine had, in fact, feminised the art public.<sup>269</sup> “Unilaterals”, another article that appeared in the first issue, similarly



situated the women artists, Marion Beckett and Katherine Rhoades, between the “inside” at “291” and the general public.<sup>270</sup> Both these pieces implied that it was men who formed the true “inside” at the gallery and that women could best participate in “291” as consumers of art. Rhoades’ two poems in the early issues of the magazine were, as we have seen, actually written from the point of view of a female member of the audience, suggesting that the women members of the circle knew where they stood in the eyes of men. The aim of the performances that Rhoades attended seems to have been to ravish her by sheer power of expression, with the intention of bringing about a complete union between art and audience. In “New York, at first, did not see...,” de Zayas seems to express his wholehearted approval for the relation of dominance described by Rhoades and its aesthetic aims. The true American artist, he implied, was the kind of man who could successfully woo an audience of Katherine Rhoades.

I believe, however, that de Zayas’ essay was a little more complicated than is, at first, apparent. The relationship between artists and public that he envisaged was, as I tried to show in the previous section, not entirely one of dominance, and neither was the ideal artist/promoter understood to be completely self-sufficient. In de Zayas’ opinion, some participation from outside the ranks of art was, as we have seen, a very necessary constituent in the development of American art. There is, in fact another set of polarities present in de Zayas’ essay that is, I believe, even more important than the opposition of male and female he set out at its beginning. The negative pole of this pair of opposites was inhibition, both on the part of the girl-publics who used birth control, and on that of American intellectuals, the “geldings” and “homosexuals” of the art world. On the positive side were free, easy and fruitful sexual relations, where both partners were lusty and uninhibited, and none of this birth control nonsense was involved.<sup>271</sup> Among modern artists, de Zayas found that only Picabia had been able to achieve the perfect state of desire that made such productive relations possible. Eschewing protection, Picabia had “married America like a man who is not afraid of the



consequences.”<sup>272</sup> De Zayas implied that, if only American artists would follow Picabia’s example, then the United States would be truly aroused and the benefits would flow:

In order to attain living results, in order to create life - no shields!

America waits to be discovered. And there is but one way: -----  
DISCOVER IT!<sup>273</sup>

What I am getting at is that in his essay de Zayas demonstrated a willingness to let the artist, and by implication the artist-businessman, lose themselves a little bit in America. He professed a readiness to stand before the object without inhibitions, and suggested that what might happen in the ensuing relationship would not be his decision alone. Although the sexual relations contemplated by de Zayas were forceful, the encounter envisioned was not quite mastery and not quite rape. De Zayas seemed to imply that at bottom the artist and America were soul mates and that if they could only overcome their shyness they might have a lot of fun together:

America has the same complex mentality as the true modern artist. The same eternal sequence of emotions, and sensibility to surroundings. The same continual need of expressing itself in the present and for the present; with joy in action, and with indifference to ‘arriving.’ For it is in action that America, like the modern artist finds its joy. The only difference is that America has not yet learned to amuse itself.<sup>274</sup>

Of course, the metaphoric openness to the object described by de Zayas was still very male oriented. The required lack of inhibition lay mainly on the masculine side of the relationship, and de Zayas implied that it was by the action of strong male desire that the shyness of the public would be overcome. The intellectual and sexual candour advocated in “New York, at first, did not see...” was, in fact, quite similar to the “giving” described, and ultimately rejected, by the woman in “Mental Reactions.” Like the generosity practised as a seduction technique by the man in that poem, de Zayas seems ready to give of himself mainly in the expectation that he would receive himself back again, wiser and more powerful than before. De Zayas’ openness, therefore, remained very much within the relatively closed circuit of male creativity. All the same,



“New York, at first, did not see...” was nevertheless evidence of a supreme confidence on de Zayas’ part on the eve of his going into business. In the essay he declared himself able to set aside his misgivings regarding the anticipated relationship with America, in confidence that he would enjoy the experience and profit from it. This confidence seems, as I argued in the last section, partly to have been made possible by the presence in New York of Picabia, and the European artist’s role in de Zayas’ decision can now be seen to have had a sexual element as well. For de Zayas, Picabia’s masculinity was assured, and the example he provided of a modern artist “marrying America” without fear of “consequences” appears to have provided de Zayas with the virility he needed to do what before he had only contemplated.

## The Late Issues and the Modern Gallery

In his letter to Agnes Meyer dated July 15, 1915, Marius de Zayas suggested that the two of them make efforts to persuade Stieglitz that a more forthright approach to gallery running was now necessary. If Stieglitz would only take a “business attitude,” de Zayas wrote, he could possibly “make of New York the center of the best elements in modern art.”<sup>275</sup> Shortly thereafter, in the July/August double issue of 291, de Zayas praised the products of American business culture and the “joy in action” that had brought them into being.<sup>276</sup> Earlier in this chapter I argued that, while the subject of this essay is art in America, it can also be read as evidence of de Zayas’ personal rapprochement with business in art. In neither the letter nor the essay did de Zayas enter into details of a plan of action, but within a month he and Meyer were more clear about their objectives: in the fall they hoped to fight the “commercial” galleries on their own ground. It was left to Agnes Meyer to inform Stieglitz, then at his summer place at Lake George, of their intentions. In a letter to him dated August 16, 1915, obviously written after close consultation with de Zayas, Meyer carefully set out the case for commercialism. After going over some of the same points concerning the gallery’s



continued ineffectiveness that she and de Zayas had made between themselves, she pointed out the very real danger of maintaining the status quo. The “Sudras of progress,” she warned, were now at work in the form of Armory show organiser Walter Pach and his associates:

We felt above all things the danger that Pach and Co. would take up the thread where we have dropped it and make all your work worse than useless by letting it end in the ridiculous. We both (De Zayas said he spoke for Haviland as well) felt that the only field left is precisely the one that Pach contemplates - the scattering of works of modern artists among the American public. Now this may seem to you like commercialism only, but it is the only way of reaching the people - selling them things which they should live with and what is more important that they should have the right things? [sic]<sup>277</sup>

The rather blunt tone of this letter seems to have been a consequence of Meyer’s belief that the situation had become so grave that complete “frankness” was now necessary even at the risk of offending Stieglitz.<sup>278</sup> Despite her strong advocacy of a “business attitude,” however, Meyer maintained that their motives were, at bottom, altruistic:

Another point - These men have no market in Europe now, the best of them are poor. What more natural than to help them reach a few of the people who are over fat with war-stocks?<sup>279</sup>

Surprisingly perhaps, Stieglitz had no strong objections to their plan, which, as it soon became clear, amounted to the establishment of a “commercial” branch of “291,” to operate under de Zayas’ auspices, that would have as its primary purpose the sale of art. In a letter to de Zayas dated September 2, 1915, Stieglitz praised their decisiveness. “For years everyone seemed to rely on me,” he wrote, “I suppose that it was my fault that it was so....fortunately you saw - understood - took the initiative.”<sup>280</sup> To Meyer he wrote that, while he did not agree with her claim that “291” had “been dead last year,” he was all for the proposal.<sup>281</sup> “I see great possibilities in developing the practical side of ‘placing’ real work,” he said,

The artists both in France and in this country need the ‘proper placing’ + the public too must be given a real chance. - I had at one time hoped that ‘291’ would be able to bring this about in its own place - but envy, jealousy, personalities - forced me to eliminate that side virtually entirely. I’m glad De Z., Picabia, Haviland + you feel as strongly as you do.<sup>282</sup>



Stieglitz's ready acquiescence to their suggestion was, in fact, a tacit admission that the charges Meyer and de Zayas had made were true, and that his old methods were no longer effective in the changed circumstances of 1915. An examination of these letters, however, and the ones that followed, also reveals that, while Stieglitz was enthusiastic about the project, his connection with the new gallery was to be of the same tenuous kind he had maintained with 291 magazine. De Zayas, Meyer and Picabia were to continue working on their own while Stieglitz kept an arm's length relationship with "commercialism."

Meyer's initial overtures to Stieglitz marked the beginning of a period of fervent activity at "291" that culminated in the opening of the Modern Gallery on October 7, 1915.<sup>283</sup> Details of the preparations that led up to this event are well documented in the correspondence with Stieglitz, who remained at his summer place at Lake George, and refused even the most impassioned requests to return. Although much of the material in these letters is unexceptional, occasional light is thrown on the "291" group's aims and objectives with regard to the Modern Gallery, and on that sensitive subject, business in art. In two letters dated August 27 and September 1, 1915, de Zayas set out for Stieglitz's benefit the principles on which the new gallery was to be run, and attempted to define its relation to "291." These letters were long and repetitious, and seem motivated by a fear on de Zayas' part that Stieglitz might withdraw his support for the scheme if he did not present the correct spiritual credentials. De Zayas was therefore adamant that the high standards that Stieglitz had maintained over the years would not be debased by "commercial" dealings, and that, despite their involvement with the new place, he, Meyer and Picabia would not neglect their work at "291." The two galleries would complement one another, he wrote, but would be quite separate. While "291" engaged in "experiment," the Modern Gallery would attempt to bring artists and buyers together on mutually beneficial terms:

...our object in opening a new gallery is to do business not only to fight against



dishonest commercialism but in order to support ourselves and make others to be able to support themselves, in order to live, and make others live, and make them to be able to continue the evolution of modern art [sic]. Also to make New York a center of modern art commercially and intellectually. We are convinced that between 291 and the new gallery we will be able to accomplish that.

It will complete ‘your work’ by different methods. 291 ‘purely intellectual,’ ‘purely commercial’ at the new gallery.<sup>284</sup>

De Zayas’ repeated insistence that “291” should be kept “pure” began to suggest that he was relegating the old gallery to the realm of the “metaphysical” and therefore inconsequential. Such gaffs were probably unavoidable, however, given the intensity of de Zayas’ enthusiasm. Ironically, Stieglitz was often the more practical one in this relationship, counselling prudence and caution. In his letters from late August he warned that “even a gold mine is not self-supporting in the first year,” and advised them to find enough capital to cover an initial loss.<sup>285</sup> He also believed that a written contract with Picasso was essential if the gallery was to be a success.<sup>286</sup> One need not necessarily infer a “commercial” attitude from Stieglitz’s frank discussion of such practical details. His advice speaks mainly of a greater knowledge of the risks involved in the operation of a gallery, and a fear that he might become too deeply caught up in the project, personally and financially. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see Stieglitz, the pillar of anti-commercialism, discussing financial matters with such evident proficiency.<sup>287</sup>

Despite Stieglitz’s initial misgivings, preparations for the Modern Gallery proceeded quickly through August and the early fall of 1915. Fears for the gallery’s sustainability were allayed when Eugene Meyer agreed to back its finances for a year, and when a prime location was found at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street, the better “to try to get at the public.”<sup>288</sup> Arrangements were also made with Paul Guillaume and other dealers in Paris for the delivery of pictures, a relatively easy thing to do at a time when the French art market was in severe depression.<sup>289</sup> De Zayas also placed advertisements for the Modern Gallery in New York newspapers and in art magazines



that were very similar to ones run by “commercial” galleries such as the Montross. The group’s ambivalent attitude toward “business” in art seems, however, to have led to some uncertainty. An announcement for the new gallery, prepared by Agnes Meyer and J. B. Kerfoot, later reprinted in Camera Work, explained at length “291”’s reasons for going into business, and stressed the difference between their methods and those presumed to be the norm elsewhere.<sup>290</sup> “We have already demonstrated that it is possible to avoid commercialism by eliminating it,” they wrote.

But this demonstration will be infertile unless it be followed by another: namely, that the legitimate function of commercial intervention - that of paying its own way while bringing the producers and consumers of art into a relation of mutual service - can be free of the chicanery of self-seeking.<sup>291</sup>

This candid and idealistic statement was, however, never released, perhaps because de Zayas felt that it revealed too much about their business methods. The notice that finally appeared, inserted into issue No. 9 of 291 magazine, was much shorter, and pointed out only the new gallery’s avant-garde orientation and its close ties with “291.”

According to this announcement, the Modern Gallery existed

For the sale of paintings of the most advanced character of the modern art movement—Negro sculptures—pre-Conquest Mexican art—  
Photography<sup>292</sup>

They also maintained that

The work of ‘291’ will be continued at 291 Fifth Avenue in the same spirit and manner as heretofore

The MODERN GALLERY is but an additional expression of ‘291’<sup>293</sup>

The new gallery opened its doors to the public in early October, 1915, several weeks before other New York galleries, and soon after held a large inaugural exhibition that featured work by such major modern artists as Picabia, Braque, Picasso and Stieglitz, as well as African sculpture.<sup>294</sup>

Although de Zayas, in his letters to Stieglitz, claimed that 291 magazine would, like the “291” galleries, be reserved for “purely intellectual” matters, the monthly was,



in fact, used to promote the Modern Gallery almost as soon as preparations for the new project were underway.<sup>295</sup> Stieglitz appears quickly to have concurred with this decision, and he and de Zayas were quite frank about their motives in the correspondence. Two special issues of the magazine were assembled together late in the summer, but held back on de Zayas' suggestion so they could come out concurrently with the gallery opening.<sup>296</sup> As might be expected, both issues were very striking visually, and thus good copy for a gallery that specialised in modern art. Issue 7/8, dated September/October 1915, was entirely devoted to a high quality reproduction of Stieglitz's famous photograph, "The Steerage," a work that resembled cubist and abstract art in its emphasis on formal values [Fig. 41].<sup>297</sup> Stieglitz himself oversaw production of the prints, each of which was handsomely laid out on the finest Imperial Japan paper. Short articles, of the kind that had appeared in 291 earlier in the year, were to have been included in this issue as well, but were dropped, perhaps because they would have detracted from the overall impact.<sup>298</sup> Instead, two short essays by Haviland and de Zayas explained Stieglitz's work using ideas recently developed in the magazine and the by now familiar sex-generation imagery.<sup>299</sup>

The other issue, No. 9, dated November 1915, was even more visually oriented. Two cubist drawings by Picasso and Braque made up the covers [Figs. 42, 45], while two "portraits" of a woman by de Zayas and Picabia were featured on the inside [Figs. 43-44].<sup>300</sup> These latter two works were very aggressive in both style and content, and were published without distracting editorial comment. Although this second issue was intended to be the one more closely linked with the opening of the Modern Gallery, its precise import is not very clear. In a letter to Stieglitz dated August 23, 1915, de Zayas stated that, taken together, the drawings by Picasso and Braque on the covers and the "portraits" he and Picabia had "made about *Elle*" on the inside, would help to demonstrate their intentions with regard to the Modern Gallery in visual



form. "Instead of making promises," he wrote, "we tell them what we are doing, showing at the same time the relationship of the two galleries."<sup>301</sup> The "tell" in de Zayas' letter obviously refers to the sheet announcing the opening of the gallery that was included with each copy, but the "showing" is more mysterious. Although precise interpretations are not possible, I would speculate that the severe and elegant Cubist covers were meant to represent the intellectual side of the group's endeavours, now to be pursued at "291", while the aggressive inside pages should be identified with the more commercially oriented Modern Gallery. Taking their cue from 291 magazine's sexual-sophisticate image, these two works indicated that the new place would be brash, up-to-date, and willing to take risks. Given the strong association of this entire issue with the Modern Gallery, however, it seems clear that the Picasso-Braque covers also pointed to aspects of its activity, suggesting that the leaders of French Cubism had their spiritual and commercial home there as well.<sup>302</sup> Whatever the relationship of pictures to galleries, Stieglitz thought the issue such good advertising that he suggested de Zayas have 2000 copies printed if he thought it "desirable."<sup>303</sup> A copy of No. 9 was thus sent to art reviewers at each of the major New York newspapers and to many Americans and Europeans involved in the arts.<sup>304</sup> Also at this time, Ezra Pound, the expatriate American poet living in London, received a large number of copies of Camera Work and a full set of 291, with a letter expressing interest in any mention Pound might make of these periodicals in reviews.<sup>305</sup>

The other issue, devoted to Stieglitz's photograph, "The Steerage," appears, at first sight, to have less of a connection with the Modern Gallery and there is, in fact, some evidence that the editors of 291 intended from the outset to make Stieglitz's print available in a deluxe edition.<sup>306</sup> However, as plans for the new gallery developed, de Zayas seems to have realised that the photograph could be used to identify Stieglitz closely with the new business providing it was presented to the public at the right time.



Thus, while the “Steerage” issue was laid out together with No. 9 in August of 1915, its release was also held back to coincide with the Modern Gallery opening in October, when the famous photograph and other works by Stieglitz would be on view in the inaugural exhibition.<sup>307</sup> Exhibition of the print and its simultaneous publication in the magazine provided massive visual evidence of Stieglitz’s endorsement of the new gallery, and linked his reputation for quality and integrity firmly with the enterprise. Not surprisingly, the essays published with the photograph attempted to enhance Stieglitz’s prestige at a time when his support was most needed. In the course of his efforts to explain Stieglitz’s importance de Zayas maintained not only that “Stieglitz comprises the history of photography in the United States,” but also claimed that he was the American counterpart of the great European avant-gardists.<sup>308</sup> “We have escaped from the fetishism into which that word ‘Art’ had hypnotised us,” he wrote, “making us sensitives to the respective realities of our inner selves, and of the outer world.”

A group of men in France has flooded our inner world with the light of a new plastic expression. Stieglitz in America, through photography, has shown us, as far as is possible, the objectivity of the outer world.<sup>309</sup>

De Zayas’ comments effectively placed Stieglitz’s photographic innovations in a course parallel and complementary to artistic developments in Europe, thus enlisting the proprietor of “291” in the ranks of the painters who were to be exhibited at the Modern Gallery.

Paul Haviland’s essay associated photography with the European mainstream in a similar fashion.<sup>310</sup> By applying the European concept of the “fille née sans mère” to this “American” art, Haviland implied that Stieglitz had been able to create work with universal significance in spite of his provincial origins, and that by weding modern man to modern machinery he had, in fact, done even better than the Europeans. These attempts on the part of de Zayas and Haviland to find in Stieglitz’s art a fulfilment of



both European and American aspirations were, needless to say, addressed to readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The essays, which appeared in both French and English, interpreted Stieglitz in terms that gave him greater importance for American admirers of the avant-garde, while, at the same time, demonstrating to Parisian artists and dealers that the United States was, in spite of appearances, quite in the thick of recent developments. It is probably no coincidence that “The Steerage” was one of Stieglitz’s most formally severe photographs, and that it had been praised by Picasso when de Zayas showed him a print in the summer of 1914.<sup>311</sup>

From the intellectual and stylistic points of view, the works contained in both the “Steerage” and the “Modern Gallery” issues were quite similar to material that had previously been published in 291. These continuities had the effect of linking the Modern Gallery with the bolder, more outgoing, image that the editors had been trying to create for themselves through the magazine. Sexual and generative imagery was strongly in evidence, and although business and the American public were not explicitly discussed, the relationship between the artist and that uniquely American entity, the machine, was the subject of essays by Haviland and de Zayas. The works published also made use of those polarities of union and alienation that had been so conspicuous in the past. What was new, however, was an even greater “masculinisation” of the act of artistic creation, accompanied by a misogynistic streak that tended to exclude women from the artistic process altogether.

The two essays in the “Steerage” issue took up themes that had been developed over the summer by Picabia’s machine drawings, and in de Zayas’ essay, “New York, at first, did not see....” Haviland’s use of the concept of the “daughter born without a mother” to describe photography seems to owe most to this earlier work, but a careful reading of de Zayas’ more sober piece reveals that it too has much in common with what had gone before. This essay, which does not have a title, attempted to describe



just what it was that Stieglitz did when he took a photograph. De Zayas argued that photography was essentially directed toward “objective fact,” and that Stieglitz, almost alone among photographers, had achieved the perfect state of consciousness that allowed the camera to make an accurate record of the world:

I speak of that photography in which the genius of man leaves to the machine its full power of expression. For it is only thus that we can reach a comprehension of pure objectivity.

Objective truth takes precedence over Stieglitz in his work. By means of a machine he shows us the outer life....

And in seeking truth he has acted as a real creator.<sup>312</sup>

Although these ideas were based on theories of photography that de Zayas had earlier published in Camera Work, it is interesting that the suppression of individuality he imputed to Stieglitz bears such a strong resemblance to the state of mind possessed by the ideal American artist in “New York, at first, did not see....”<sup>313</sup> There, de Zayas had argued that Americans should endeavour to achieve a similarly direct and unmediated relationship with their surroundings if they were to make a significant contribution to modern art. Picabia, the only successful “American” artist, was described in terms very similar to those later applied to Stieglitz:

He does not protect himself with any shield. He has married America like a man who is not afraid of the consequences. He has obtained results. And he has brought these to ‘291’ which accepts them as experience, and publishes them with the conviction that they have the positive value which all striving toward objective truth possesses.<sup>314</sup>

De Zayas’ description of Stieglitz in the same manner as Picabia implied that Americans, like their European colleagues, were at the very forefront of new artistic developments. In the essay, incidentally, de Zayas also demonstrated his continued belief in the value of an extroverted attitude on the part of the artist toward the world at large, and a confidence that America had something to offer to those who could remain focused on the “objective.” De Zayas’ faith in an easy commerce between inner and outer showed him still at his most sanguine on the eve of going into business. If I am right about the subtext in “New York, at first, did not see...,” then the “Steerage” essay



is further evidence of his continued love affair with the “commercial” aspects of American culture.

Whereas the “Steerage” essay pointed to an openness on de Zayas’ part to his surroundings, Haviland’s contribution to the issue implied quite the opposite. Although his piece exhibited some of the same confidence in the value of an art produced by means of a machine, its exclusive use of the image of the “daughter born without a mother,” with its suggestions of artistic omniscience, suggests that Haviland was much less willing to allow something from outside the artist into the process of creation. In its essentials, Haviland’s argument was that photography had proved itself one of the best examples of a fruitful relationship between artist and machine. Machines, in his opinion, were (female) beings created by “man” “in his own image,” and photography was one of the admirable products that had resulted from the union with this new birth.<sup>315</sup> Haviland, as he worked out his ideas, seems, like de Zayas, to have come under considerable influence from Picabia, and much of what he had to say about photography could as easily apply to images such the “*Fille née sans mère*.” As has already been noted, the idea of machines as artificial life created by men, and their sexing as female, had a long history in European art and literature. While fantastic creations such as Picabia’s “*Fille*” were often entertaining they were also in quite deadly earnest. On the one hand, these visions of a sort of Nietzschean self-overcoming by technological means, were attempts, on the part of the artist, to appropriate the superior power of technology for art. On the other hand, however, these fantasies can also be understood as efforts to restrain the seeming autonomy and influence of technology by subordinating it to the will of the artist.<sup>316</sup> An appropriation of technology and a simultaneous desire to control it seems, in fact, very much present in Haviland’s essay. At the beginning of the piece, he expressed an admiration for machines that even allowed them a predominant place in art:

MAN HAS MADE THE MACHINE SUPERIOR TO HIMSELF.  
THAT IS WHY HE ADMires HER. HAVING MADE HER SUPERIOR TO



HIMSELF, HE ENDOWS THE SUPERIOR BEINGS WHICH HE CONCEIVES IN HIS POETRY AND IN HIS PLASTIQUE WITH THE QUALITIES OF MACHINES.<sup>317</sup>

Farther on in the essay, however, Haviland showed himself equally anxious to keep the machine in a subordinate position:

MAN GAVE HER EVERY QUALIFICATION EXCEPT THOUGHT. SHE SUBMITS TO HIS WILL BUT HE MUST DIRECT HER ACTIVITIES. WITHOUT HIM SHE REMAINS A WONDERFUL BEING WITHOUT AIM OR ANATOMY.<sup>318</sup>

Then, in the final sentences of his essay, Haviland claimed that it was, in fact, only the male principle, embodied in the (male) artist, that could fully bring out the machine's latent potential:

THROUGH THEIR MATING THEY COMPLETE ONE ANOTHER. SHE BRINGS FORTH ACCORDING TO HIS CONCEPTIONS.

PHOTOGRAPHY IS ONE OF THE FINE FRUITS OF THIS UNION. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT IS ONE ELEMENT OF THIS NEW TRINITY; MAN, THE CREATOR, WITH THOUGHT AND WILL; THE MACHINE, MOTHER-ACTION; AND THEIR PRODUCT, THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED.<sup>319</sup>

The desire to control the machine revealed in Haviland's essay was very similar, in some respects, to contemporary efforts to keep independent-minded women in their place, and the two exigencies were, in fact, mapped on to one another here.<sup>320</sup> I suspect that Haviland's need to discipline the machine also belied his considerable anxiety in the face of supposed threats to his artistic autonomy from the modern world. The relations with the machine postulated by Haviland's piece were, therefore, different from the "mating" with the "objective" as imagined by de Zayas in his essay. Although de Zayas' ideal relationship with the outer world was, of course, open to some of the criticisms levelled at male "giving" that were discussed earlier, his open-ended conception of photography seemed at least to leave room for a certain interaction with the "objective." The ambivalence toward the machine present in Haviland's essay, on the other hand, would seem to speak of a certain ambivalence and anxiety on the part of the editors of 291 as they prepared to meet the modern world and go into business for



themselves.<sup>321</sup>

The misogyny implicit in the notion of the “fille née sans mère” came to the fore in the two portraits of “Elle” by Picabia and de Zayas published in 291 No. 9, the “Modern Gallery” issue [Figs. 43-44].<sup>322</sup> Although the two artists claimed to have been working independently, the portraits were, if an article in the magazine Arts and Decoration is to be believed, depictions of the same unidentified woman.<sup>323</sup> De Zayas and Picabia seem also to have intended their work to provide more than just an accurate depiction of an individual person. Katherine Rhoades, in a letter to Stieglitz written at about the time the two men initiated their project, mentioned some work that “De Z. and Picabia are doing - expressing an objectivity of - say woman - or city....”<sup>324</sup> While hardly conclusive, the evidence of the letter suggests that the two artists were engaged in some sort of abstraction of “woman” in general as part of their positivist-artistic endeavours. The results of their collaboration were striking, if somewhat disturbing. Picabia’s portrait, entitled “Voila Elle” [Fig. 44], presented readers with a decidedly female “fille née sans mère” in possession of a kind of internal feedback mechanism. Although the drawing is open to a variety of interpretations, it would seem that, when the machine is in operation, the pistol at bottom fires at the target, the impact of bullets on which reocks the gun, starting the firing process over again. Smoke and heat produced by these mechanical exertions are taken away by the stovepipes in the background. The self-initiated firing mechanism illustrated in the portrait points to some sort of masturbatory or other self-indulgent activity on the part of the “woman” portrayed that, in Picabia’s opinion, causes her nothing but harm. The woman depicted in de Zayas’ “Femme!” [Fig. 43] shared many of these same traits, although de Zayas was able to be somewhat more specific. Using a Simultanist style that laid words out in an abstract formation, de Zayas showed the woman to be stupid (“pas d’intellectualisme”), silly (“hurluburlu”), materialistic (“atrophie cérébrale causée par



matérialité pure”), and interested only in pleasure (“elle n’a pas la peur du plaisir”). She is also a drunk (“ivre - ivre bonne - ivre morte”), and is self-destructive (“jouissance à déchirer son être social”). Worst of all, however, she is “pas le miroir de son mâle,” not the image of what men want her to be.<sup>325</sup> Needless to say, both de Zayas’ and Picabia’s portraits were blunt in their choice of imagery, and the depictions were consistently derogatory.<sup>326</sup> The two artists made use of time-worn clichés about women’s vanity, self-absorption, and danger to men, merely updating them to twentieth-century proportions. The bluntness of the portraits can partly be explained by a desire to attract attention to them, which, in fact, is what happened when the works were shown in the opening exhibition at the Modern Gallery. The reviewer for Arts and Decoration found that “the portraits were a revelation in themselves, one that brought the word naughty to mind more rapidly than any other....”<sup>327</sup>

Like Haviland’s essay on photography, the two portraits of “Elle” seem very much a product of fear, and speak of a deep insecurity in the face of women’s increasing claims to independence in society at large, and perhaps to their greater participation in “291.” Not surprisingly, both portraits were of women who, even as they exhibited a disturbingly self-destructive tendency, also possessed a self-sufficiency that seemed to preclude the need for masculine attention. Picabia’s “Voilà Elle” depicted a woman-being enjoying a pleasure apparently achieved without masculine assistance, while the woman in de Zayas’ “Femme!” failed in her duty to be “the mirror of her man.” De Zayas’ poem seems also to present yet another one of those unfulfilled relationships that were so common in 291 magazine, for if the handwritten sentence toward the bottom right is to be believed, this woman had also rebuffed the author’s amorous advances. “Mais je vous aime et vous devez bien m’aimer un peu,” pleads de Zayas. Aspects of this poem, in fact, strongly bring to mind the equally unfulfilled relationship described in “Mental Reactions” [Fig. 21], a work in which de Zayas also had a part. Women portrayed in both these poems exhibited a confusion and



self-absorption that were interpreted as vanity by the male artist, and both possessed an independent streak that led them to disregard the overtures of men. De Zayas even signalled his disapproval of their rebelliousness in similar ways, most notably by the accentuation of perfume and make up labels (“OPIUM-COCO,” “ROUGE BLEU JAUNE” in “Femme!”, “PARFUMERIE DE NICE,” “PARFUM ULTRA PERSISTANT” in “Mental Reactions”).<sup>328</sup> From the masculine point of view the women in “Mental Reactions,” “Femme!,” and “Voilà Elle” were all bad machines and bad women. In all three works, Picabia and de Zayas attempted to manage their wilfulness by subordinating their subjects to the controlling hand of the artist.<sup>329</sup> Women who exhibited a taste for autonomy were here turned into obedient “filles nées sans mère,” products of the artist’s own autonomy. Exhibition of these works, in effect a public exposure of women’s sins, served as a further means of control.<sup>330</sup>

The last two issues of 291, Nos. 10-11 (December 1915/January 1916) and No. 12 (February 1916), are something of a disappointment. While they contained much that is interesting and challenging, they lack the unity of earlier issues and are not nearly as visually exciting. Moreover, despite the appearance of several more “fille nées sans mère,” neither issue adds much that is new to the sexual-mechanical theme, and the dialogue on public, business and art is missing as well. The presence of these themes had been responsible for some of the more interesting work to appear in 291, and without their impetus the magazine lost something of its edge. Notably, American art, as such, was no longer an issue either, and although a few examples of work by American artists did appear, a uniquely American modernism no longer seemed to interest the editors very much. These changes in 291 probably stemmed from the fact that, in these last two issues, the magazine was little more than a vehicle for the promotion of the Modern Gallery. That space between the editors’ ambitions and the reality of the American situation that had provoked some of the magazine’s more outrageous attempts to find a place for itself was now missing and was replaced by an



almost complete identification of means and end. To use a sexual analogy, of a type that de Zayas himself might have used, these late issues had a distinctly post-coital air to them, as if the courtship was now over and the relationship with the public had been consummated. The public, previously the subject of much speculation in the magazine, had now to be met on a daily basis at the gallery itself and, with cash riding on the outcome of transactions, the editors probably decided that it was not prudent to shock the audience very much. Rather, it was offered European work marked as difficult and therefore valuable.

In its last incarnation, then, 291 became the in-house publication of the Modern Gallery. Picasso, with whom the proprietors perhaps wanted most to be associated, occupied a very prominent place, both in the magazine and at the gallery. His work was shown in the inaugural exhibition from October 16(?) through November 13, 1915, and again only a month later, between December 18, 1915 and January 1, 1916. Not surprisingly, the cover of Nos. 10/11 (December 1915/January 1916), the first issue of 291 to appear after the opening of the gallery, reproduced a Picasso collage of the synthetic period on its cover [Fig. 46]. Inside, a portrait of Picasso by de Zayas, showing a bull-like figure and a rose, created a brooding, romantic image of the artist, similar to that which later inhabited popular imagination [Fig. 47].<sup>331</sup> Picasso also figured prominently in Max Jacob's column, "La Vie Artistique," published in both these issues.<sup>332</sup> Although de Zayas had assured Stieglitz that he would resist the temptation to bring out his own or Picabia's works for the purpose of publicity, Picabia's machine drawings and paintings also received extensive exposure.<sup>333</sup> Within the space of five months his work was exhibited in the opening exhibition, again between January 5 and 22, 1916, and then once more from February 12(?) through March 4, 1916. In 291, two of Picabia's machine drawings were reproduced in Nos. 10/11 [Figs. 48-49], while a statement by the artist made an appearance in No. 12



(February 1916) to coincide with his last show of the season.<sup>334</sup> African sculpture, de Zayas' special purview, was on view at the gallery almost without a break from October of 1915 until February of 1916, and received similarly extensive coverage in 291, notably in the form of a reprint in No. 12 of de Zayas' 1914 statement on the importance of African sculpture for modern art.<sup>335</sup> As if to underline its new orientation, 291 magazine displayed an utter lack of interest in the New York art scene outside the doors of the Modern Gallery. No comment at all was made on exhibitions at the other "commercial" galleries, nor did activities at Stieglitz's "291" receive mention.<sup>336</sup>

The work that appeared in the last two issues of 291 varied considerably in quality and substance. The ideas expressed in the essays published were often rather bland, and added little that was really new. De Zayas' little piece on African art in No. 12 had, in fact, originally been released over a year before in the form of a catalogue for the first African sculpture exhibition at "291." A summary of de Zayas' ideas on the influence of African art on modern "Form," its publication in 291 gave the perhaps mistaken impression that de Zayas had returned to his interests of two years previous, and that he had been unaffected by his association with "Simultanism." Picabia's essay in the same issue was couched in the familiar language of subject and object that had for years been used to justify abstraction, and contributed little to the understanding of his machine art. Interestingly, his statement was so general that his comments seem to apply equally well to both abstract art and machine works, and it is hard to say just how it fit into the present context.<sup>337</sup>

The most interesting work in these last issues came from members of the Apollinaire circle in Paris, and from American women artists and writers, whose work made a belated reappearance in the final number. Two women were represented. Mrs.



A. Roosevelt, an artist about whom very little is known, exhibited a work entitled “Tennis Player - Serving” in the spring sculpture show at the Modern Gallery, and a photograph of this severe and formal structure was duly reproduced in the magazine [Fig. 50].<sup>338</sup> The same issue also published yet another poem by Katherine Rhoades entitled “Narcosis.”<sup>339</sup> One of her better poetic efforts, it can be interpreted as a critique of the interest displayed by certain male members of the group in the more frenzied aspects of modernity. Rhoades’ poem seemed to question the value of the city and its “joy in action”:

Within - without -  
Whirling antagonisms  
  
Perpetual motion  
Light  
Bulk  
Lesion  
Need  
  
Cohesion?<sup>340</sup>

dissipating  
destroying

French contributions, however, dominated the later issues, and their strong presence probably reveals much about what de Zayas was now attempting to do with 291. Having succeeded in drawing a considerable amount of international attention to the magazine, he seems to have tried to use these last issues in a final effort to make New York a centre of French artistic activity.<sup>341</sup> Almost all the European work published had a common origin with artists and writers championed by Apollinaire, probably still the most important figure in the Parisian avant-garde. Picasso and Picabia were both associated with him, and the French literary works published, all of which appeared without English translations, had the same pedigree. Some of these items were very strange things indeed and would have appealed only to readers with the most rarefied tastes. Ribemont-Dessaignes’ poem, “Musique,” which appeared in Nos. 10/11, for example, was a lyrical piece of avant-gardism that made use of an almost surreal juxtaposition and choice of words.<sup>342</sup> The last two issues also featured a



column by Max Jacob headed “La Vie Artistique” that purported to relate the art news from Paris. Incorporating nonsense, parody, and black humour, it could not have been appreciated by anyone without a thorough knowledge of the personalities and tendencies in contemporary French art and literature. Picabia’s machine portrait of Jacob in No. 12 [Fig. 49] made allusion to the writer’s recent conversion to Catholicism, an event that had caused some amusement among his friends, but that would have been of little interest to those unacquainted with the man or his work. These items of French origin seem to have been included in 291 both with an eye to the curiosity they might arouse in New York and with a Parisian readership in mind.<sup>343</sup> In 1916, in fact, Parisian and New York audiences were becoming more alike as French artists and writers in considerable numbers travelled to New York to escape the war. In publishing so much French material, de Zayas’ activities resembled those of Walter Arensberg, who had already collected Duchamp, Gleizes, Crotti and others for his salon at 33 West 67th Street. De Zayas seems to have hoped he could draw members of the Apollinaire circle to the Modern Gallery, in the form of their work, if not as people, while the Parisian art and literary markets were still in depression.<sup>344</sup>

Despite de Zayas’ considerable promotional efforts, both through 291 and in the form of newspaper advertisements, the Modern Gallery was not a great success in commercial terms. Although its exhibitions were consistently reviewed in newspapers and art magazines, there were few paying customers, and de Zayas soon proved himself no better a vendor of modern art than Stieglitz. In his memoir of these years de Zayas wrote:

Soon I found that ‘pictures do not sell themselves’ was only too true, and that I did not have the qualities of a salesman. Fortunately, the Modern gallery did not depend on sales for existence. Eugene Meyers [sic], Jr. had provided for it with the conviction that there would be no returns, and he was not to be disappointed. The commercial side of the Modern Gallery was therefore very negligible. In the three years of its existence there were only two buyers, Arthur B. Davies who knew all there was to be known about buying pictures, and John Quinn who just bought and bought.<sup>345</sup>



When the gallery closed in 1918, Walter Arensberg bought up some of the remaining stock. It is hard not to come to the conclusion that de Zayas, driven by his own enthusiasm, had misread events rather badly. Despite the widespread American interest in modern art, the public was not, in fact, ready for a European art invasion that could support itself commercially. America and the modern artist were, apparently, not very much alike after all, and not ready for a "marriage." The Modern Gallery was, however, successful on some of the same terms that "291" had been, something that was just as important as commercial success for de Zayas and the others. It soon became a place much like "291," where de Zayas made efforts to show the public the best of the modern movement, and where artists came to talk to each other and catch up on the latest ideas. What emerged from all the preparation, however, was not quite what had been heralded by 291 magazine.



## Notes

1. This is the assumption that lies in back of Willard Bohn's often insightful account in "Guillaume Apollinaire and the New York Avant-Garde," Comparative Literature Studies 13 (March 1976), 40-50; and Apollinaire and the Faceless Man: The Creation and Evolution of a Modern Motif (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1991), 132-34. Bohn says of the magazine: "On the most general level de Zayas adopted as his guidelines such Apollinairean aesthetic principles as modernism, spontaneity, and surprise - principles which played an important role in what Apollinaire was later to name 'surrealisme.' Language, form, and content in 291 all reflect these preoccupations and reveal a determined effort to apply them as principles." Bohn, "Guillaume Apollinaire," 43. The first issue of 291 magazine itself was made up of one large sheet of paper that folded out to form six pages. Later issues all contained four pages. Subscriptions to the monthly were five dollars per annum, while single issues sold for one dollar. Single copies of back issues were later available at ten cents each.
2. This is, of course, most true of the numerous biographies and other books and articles on Picabia. See, for example: William A. Camfield, Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 77-87; Camfield, "The Machinist Style of Francis Picabia," Art Bulletin 48 (1966), 309-22; Maria L. Borras, Picabia (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 154-56.
3. This is the perspective taken by Dickran Tashjian in Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde 1910-1925 (Middleton, Conn. Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 29-48; also that work which deals specifically with the influence of Picabia on American art. For example, Barbara Zabel "The Machine as Metaphor, Model, and Microcosm: Technology in American Art, 1915-1930," Arts Magazine 57, no.4 (December 1982), 100-05; and Camfield, Picabia, 106-09.
4. The worst offender here is Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 29-48. Also: Krzysztof Fijalkowski, "Dada and the Machine," Journal of European Studies 17 (1987): 239-240. This interpretation has its origins in accounts by individuals active in the Dada movement: Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp," in Dada Painters and Poets, ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz Inc., 1951), 257-58, 261; Hans Richter, Dada: Art and Anti-Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), 84. For another discussion of 291 magazine see Ileana Leavens, From 291 to Zurich: The Birth of Dada (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 125-139.
5. On July 24, 1915, Stieglitz wrote to Agnes Meyer: "It is too bad I could not stay over as there was much I wanted to say about many things not pertaining to 291 - the publication. - It was after 8:30 when I reached ----. De Z. and I stood at 125th St. and Madison Ave. over an hour discussing the seemingly endless topic." Few details were, however, provided in the letter. Alfred Stieglitz to Agnes Meyer, 24 July 1915, Agnes Meyer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Hereafter referred to as AMP.
6. Agnes Meyer to Charles Freer, 4 March 1915, AMP.



7. "291 - A New Publication," Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 62.

8. Alfred Stieglitz to Dorothy Norman, early 1930s? Quoted in Dorothy Norman, "Introducing 291," 291 (New York: Arno Press, 1972). Each version of Norman's accounts of her "Conversations" with Stieglitz is slightly different from the others. The conversations recorded took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They are preserved in the form of typewritten manuscripts in ASA.

9. Alfred Stieglitz, "The Magazine '291' and 'The Steerage,'" "Conversation" with Alfred Stieglitz recorded by Dorothy Norman, typewritten transcript, ASA.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. According to Stieglitz his role in the magazine was more or less that of an "onlooker." Ibid.

12. Quoted in Norman, "Introducing 291."

13. Marius de Zayas to Agnes Meyer, 15 July 1915, AMP. This letter is discussed in greater detail below.

14. That 291 magazine was a vehicle by which the de Zayas-Meyer faction at "291" attempted to make their views known has been noted. See Timothy Rodgers, "False Memories: Alfred Stieglitz and the Development of the Nationalist Aesthetic," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 63-64; William Innes Homer, Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), 190-94; and Leavens '291' to Zurich, 130-33. No attempt has been made, however, to look closely at the "promotional" aspects of the magazine.

15. Stieglitz was never very consistent in his anti-commercial stance. Roger Piatt Hull notes that "Stieglitz oversaw the layout of the advertising [in Camera Work], and when advertisers did not submit ready-designed material, composed much of it himself." He also notes that "Stieglitz rarely endorsed specific products, but it was emphasised that an advertisement in Camera Work was in good company." Roger Piatt Hull in "Camera Work, An American Quarterly" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1970), 37-38.

16. Agnes Meyer to Charles Freer, 4 March 1915, AMP.

17. Estera Milman notes with respect to 291 and other avant-garde publications that "in the final analysis, the avant-garde's recurrent interaction with the text served as a means by which the myth of the avant-garde was strengthened; it was through such interaction that they maintained their most pervasive fiction, the myth of functionality." Estera Milman, "The Text and the Myth of the Avant-Garde," Visible Language 21, nos. 3-4 (1987), 337.

18. There is evidence of this in Katherine Rhoades' many letters to Stieglitz from this time. See for example, Katherine Rhoades to Alfred Stieglitz, 26 April 1915, ASA: "It's the subjectivity - of us all - the introspection - the hypercriticalness - or anything



else you want to call it - that makes the atmosphere so tense that most of us are ready to blow up."

19. Alfred Stieglitz to Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia ("Mrs. Picabia"), 30 December 1915, ASA.

20. Ibid. See also Alfred Stieglitz to Frank Goetz, December 23 1915, ASA. For an account of this period see Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 172-76, 190-96; Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), 177-207.

21. Marius de Zayas, "How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York," intro. and notes by Francis M. Naumann, Arts Magazine 54, no. 8 (April 1980), 112.

22. Judith Zilczer, "The Aesthetic Struggle in America, 1913-1918, Abstract Art and Theory in the Stieglitz Circle" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1975), 238-61.

23. '291' Exhibitions: 1914-1916, Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 8, 7.

24. Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, Montross Gallery, March 23 - April 24, 1915.

25. Henry McBride, review of "Third Exhibition of Children's Drawings" at "291," New York Sun, 1915. Reprinted, Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 39. "Cubism," of course, was a term used to describe a whole range of modern tendencies.

26. Ibid, 39-40. One of these shows was the children's art exhibit at "291."

27. Ibid, 39.

28. Ibid, 40. Abraham A. Davidson describes Davies' art as "an adaptation of a Cubist style that was really a patterning of high key colors grafted onto conservatively drawn figures like a harlequin's coat." Davidson, Early American Modernist Painting 1910-1935 (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 253.

29. In his review of the African art show Henry McBride expressed the opinion that Stieglitz was deliberately trying to shock conservative critics such as Kenyon Cox. Henry McBride, review of "African Savage Art" at "291," New York Sun, 1915. Reprinted in Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 15-16.

30. Steichen participated in several "291" activities in late 1914 and early 1915. Two of his drawings were also reproduced in the 291, Nos. 1 and 3.

31. "Archaic Mexican Pottery," and "Kalograms" by the Mexican artist Torres Palomar were shown concurrently.

32. Two of these works later surfaced in the Meyer estate. See Camfield, Francis Picabia, 68.

33. In a letter to Stieglitz written from Paris in June of 1914 de Zayas recommended



that “291” show both Picasso’s and Picabia’s work. Picasso, he wrote “represents in his work the expression of pure sensibility, the action of matter on the senses and also of the senses on matter while Picabia’s work is the expression of pure thought. Picasso could never work without dealing with objectivity while Picabia forgets matter to express only, maybe the memory of something that has happened. One expresses the object the other the action.” Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 30 June 1915, ASA.

34. “‘291’ Exhibitions,” Camera Work, October 1916, 8. This is, of course, a retrospective point of view.

35. Forbes Watson, review of “African Savage Art” at “291,” New York Evening Post, 1915. Reprinted in Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 15.

36. Elizabeth Luther Carey, review of “Paintings by Francis Picabia” at “291,” New York Times, 1915. Reprinted in Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 17.

37. See for example the explanation of Picasso according to Caffin: Charles Caffin, review of Picasso-Braque exhibition at “291,” 1915. Reprinted in Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 16-17.

38. See Camfield, Francis Picabia, 58.

39. Marius de Zayas, “291 Throws Back Its Forelock,” 291 1 (March 1915), 1. The brashness of the cover has frequently been noted. See for example, Willard Bohn, “The Abstract Vision of Marius de Zayas,” Art Bulletin 62, no.3 (September 1980), 445-46.

40. Agnes Meyer, “How Versus Why,” 291 1 (March 1915), 2. Meyer had not been spending as much time at “291” in recent years and the article seems to mark her reentry into full participation in the Stieglitz circle. On Meyer: Douglas Hyland, “Agnes Ernst Meyer, Patron of American Modernism,” American Art Journal 12, no. 1 (Winter 1980), 64-81.

41. Huneker’s criticism did fall on the emotional side of the spectrum. See Arlene Olsen, Art Critics and the Avant-Garde, New York, 1900-1913 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 43-45, 93.

42. Meyer, “How Versus Why,” 2.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid. At the end of the article, however, Meyer looked forward to the time when the “SCHOLASTIC PERIOD OF ART” will have passed and the truly “experimental” period arrived, “leaving the artist free once more to find his own truths with an untrammelled mind.” Ibid.

46. The article, I suspect, may also have held a personal importance for Meyer. Its assertive, no nonsense attitude would have identified her as someone who should be taken seriously in the “291” group and in the New York art world. The objective,



“scientific” standards in criticism advocated would also have been gender neutral and recall her earlier interest in mathematics, a subject she enjoyed “because the rules of the game were precise and failure to play it correctly could be checked with exactitude.” Agnes Meyer, Out of These Roots (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 31.

47. Meyer, “How Versus Why,” 2.

48. “How Versus Why” also provided a further answer, from the perspective of a “scientific” art, to the charges that John Weichsel had recently laid against the modern movement

49. Paul B. Haviland, “291,” 291 1 (March 1915), 4. The article does not have a title but is identified as “291” in the Arno Press reprint of 291. Like “How Versus Why,” this piece may also be an expression of group opinions.

50. Ibid. The use of the word “machine” to describe “291” may have some significance.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid. The reference is to: Eduard Steichen, “291,” Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January, 1915), 65. Steichen also contributed a drawing to 291 No. 1 (page 6) entitled “What is Rotten in the State of Denmark” that probably also refers to the current state of affairs at the gallery. It forms another part of the critique of Stieglitz undertaken in the issue.

53. “Satirism and Satyrism,” “Simultanism,” “Matisse and New York,” 291 1 (March 1915), 5. The authors of these articles are not known but they may have been written by Paul Haviland, who was also responsible for many of the exhibition “Notes” in Camera Work. Publication of this kind of material was also another way of circumventing the professional critics.

54. “Matisse and New York,” 5.

55. “Simultanism,” 5.

56. “Sincerism,” 291 1 (March 1915), 5.

57. “Idiotism,” 291 1 (March 1915), 5.

58. “Unilaterals,” 291 1 (March 1915). 5.

59. This article is also interesting because of what it says about “291” opinions of Katherine Rhoades and Marion Beckett, the two women members of the circle exhibited. According to the article, certain members of the “public” were offended by the “naturalistic character” of the art on display and thought “that the sanctuary of the mystery of abstract art” had been “profaned.” These people, however, had missed the point of the exhibition, which was to allow the public to contribute towards the artist’s own development. The article, I believe, has the effect of situating Rhoades and Beckett between the “public” and the “inside” at “291.” It is also evidence that certain



individuals at “291” were uncomfortable with the association of the gallery with this work, the whereabouts of most of which is, incidentally, unknown.

60. “Simultanism,” 5. The source is: Guillaume Apollinaire, “Simultanisme-Librettisme,” Les Soirées de Paris (June 1914), 322-25.

61. “Simultanism,” 5.

62. In his article for Les Soirées de Paris, Apollinaire identified Picasso as one of the original simultanists, an association that probably gave the tendency greater appeal for de Zayas. Apollinaire, “Simultanisme-Librettisme,” 324.

63. Guillaume Apollinaire, “Voyage,” 291 1 (March 1915), 3. 291 magazine was printed on one huge page that folded out. Apollinaire’s poem would therefore have been at its physical centre. This point is made in Bohn, “Guillaume Apollinaire,” 47. The bias against printed Simultanism in the article may be the result of a selective paraphrase of Apollinaire’s original.

64. Apollinaire said of simultanist works that they could be taken in “comme un chef d’orchestre lit d’un seul coup les notes superposées dans la partition, comme on voit d’un seul coup les éléments plastiques et imprimés d’une affiche.” (“as a conductor reads at a single glance the notes superposed on a score, or as one sees all at once the plastic elements and print of a poster.”) [my translation] Apollinaire, “Simultanisme-Librettisme,” 324.

65. “Simultanism,” 5. Roger Shattuck writes about the ambiguity in Apollinaire’s longer poetry: “Apollinaire’s ‘lack of identity,’ which sought a new self through a simultanist identification with the universe, takes on its true aspect as a *reversal of consciousness*. This huge ambition was to him the most natural thing in the world. Through the sequence of important long poems...he increasingly sought himself outside himself. It is as if his *I* were the exterior world from which, once he had radiated himself into it, he could look back wistfully and indulgently upon his old self as a pathetic object.” [Shattuck’s italics.] Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), 215-16. This is of course a far cry from naturalistic description.

66. The etching resembles works identified as having been exhibited at “291” in 1914-15 by de Zayas, “How, When, and Why,” 102.

67. “Unilaterals,” 5.

68. Bohn, Faceless Man, 144-45.

69. “I have been invited to exhibit some of my ideographic poems in New York. If this works out it will be marvellous.” Guillaume Apollinaire to Lou de Coligny, 21 April 1915, in Lettres à Lou (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 308. Quoted and translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 144.

70. Bohn, Faceless Man, 145.

71. Among the letters that mention the mailing or receipt of issues of 291 to Europe are:



Alfred Stieglitz to Adolph Basler, 7 May 1915, ASA; Guillaume Apollinaire to Louise de Coligny, 4 June 1915, in Lettres à Lou, 431; Marie Rapp to Alfred Stieglitz, 11 August 1915, ASA; Alfred Stieglitz to Ezra Pound, 3 November 1915, ASA; Marius de Zayas to Tristan Tzara, 16 November 1916, quoted in Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 116. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 August 1915, ASA, mentions sixty copies of "the last two numbers of 291" that were sent "to people who have a real interest in modern art."

72. "Satirism and Satyristm," 5.

73. "Simultanism," 5.

74. Meyer Schapiro, in an article written some time ago, noted that the audience for modern art was, in fact, largely made up of women. "Women...were among the chief friends of the new art, buying painting and sculpture with a generous hand. Art as a realm of finesse above the crudities of power appealed to the imaginative, idealistic wives and daughters of magnates occupied with their personal fortunes. But what is in question here is not simply the quicker disposition of American women to the arts, but their response to novel forms. At this moment of general stirring of ideas of emancipation, women were especially open to manifestations of freedom within the arts." Meyer Schapiro, "Rebellion in Art," in America in Crisis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 228. In her autobiography, Agnes Meyer wrote: "When Stieglitz launched his humorous thrusts at the sterile teaching of the art schools, I found my antagonisms toward the equally conventional atmosphere of my college days explained and justified. I felt at 291 that my sails were filled by the free air I craved." Meyer, Out of These Roots, 68.

75. See Anne Hyde Greet and S. I. Lockerbie, "Commentary," in Guillaume Apollinaire, Calligrammes (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 394-35.

76. Apollinaire, "Voyage," 3.

77. Ibid.

78. Alfred Stieglitz, "One Hour's Sleep --- Three Dreams," 291 1 (March 1915), 3. The "Dreams" are discussed in Barbara Butler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916-1929 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 28-31. She notes that "The women in his dreams mirrored female stereotypes, both good and evil, that had reigned in Western art and literature for centuries." Probably not coincidentally, the juxtaposition of items by Stieglitz and Apollinaire once again linked the "leaders" of the American and French avant-gardes.

79. Stieglitz, "One Hour's Sleep," 3.

80. Ibid.

81. On the femme fatale in art: Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).



82. Stieglitz, "The Magazine '291,'" ASA.

83. See note 71, above. Issue No. 2 informed readers :"Sample copy sent FREE on request to you or your friends." 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

84. Amy Lowell, "The New Manner in Modern Poetry," The New Republic 4 March 1916, 124-25. For readership see the somewhat speculative comments in Bohn, "Guillaume Apollinaire," 49. The magazine apparently had some influence on Dada typographics. See Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 138-39. Beginning in 1916, moreover, Picabia published his own magazine entitled 391.

85. Charles Caffin to Alfred Stieglitz, 6 April 1915, ASA.

86. John Weichsel to Alfred Stieglitz, 31 July 1917, ASA.

87. Alfred Stieglitz to Marie Rapp, 3 June 1917, ASA.

88. Stieglitz broke with Meyer over the conduct of business at the Modern Gallery. This quarrel will be discussed below.

89. Agnes Meyer to Charles Freer, no date (probably early April, 1915), AMP. She also wrote: "[Stieglitz] also said that I particularly irritated [Caffin] because I was daily becoming more a thinking machine and that my femininity was all disappearing."

90. 291 magazine also met with the disapproval of long time "291" associate, Sadakichi Hartmann, who wrote to Stieglitz: "I just read '291' for the first and last time....I must confess I never expected to see such an accumulation of balderdash, rodomontade, gallimaufry, salimagundi and 'I scratch you on the back if you tickle me' rant and prattle under one cover. Das sind ja keine Blauer Reiter!" Sadakichi Hartmann to Alfred Stieglitz, 20 May 1915, ASA. Stieglitz replied with a letter that effectively ostracised him from the "291" circle. Alfred Stieglitz to Sadakichi Hartmann, 25 May 1915, ASA.

91. John Marin, "291," 291 4 (June 1915), 1.

92. Abraham Walkowitz, "291," 291 3 (May 1915), 1.

93. Apollinaire is mentioned in: "Les Soirées de Paris," 291 2 (April 1915), 1; and "Watch Their Steps," 291 3 (May 1915), 4. Visual references to his calligrammes are made in several other works published, notably J. B. Kerfoot's "A Bunch of Keys," 291 3 (May 1915), 4.

94. Albert Savinio, "Bellovees Fatales, No. 12," 291 2 (April 1915), 4; Albert Savinio, "Dammi l'Anathema, Cosa Lasciva," 291 4 (May 1915), 4

95. See chapter one notes, note 217.

96. "Rivalise donc poète avec les étiquettes des parfumeurs" ("So emulate oh poet the labels of perfume makers") Guillaume Apollinaire "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry," line 43. Quoted and translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 133. Also Apollinaire, "Zone" lines 11-12: "Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut/Voilà la



poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux" ("You read prospectus catalogues and posters which shout aloud/Here is poetry this morning and for prose there are the newspapers"). Translated in Guillaume Apollinaire, Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire, trans. Roger Shattuck (New York: New Directions), 117. Bohn makes these points with respect to "Mental Reactions," in Faceless Man, 133-34.

97. Katherine Rhoades, "I walked into a moment of greatness..."; Agnes Meyer, "Woman," 291 3 (May 1915), 2-3. The page on which these poems are laid out is a version of a "caricature" of Rhoades by de Zayas. See Douglas Hyland, Marius de Zayas: Conjurer of Souls (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1981), 120-21.

98. 291 5/6 (July-August 1915), 1-7.

99. Agnes Meyer and Marius de Zayas, "Mental Reactions," 291 2 (April 1915), 3; J. B. Kerfoot, "A Bunch of Keys," 291 3 (May 1915), 4; Marius de Zayas, Femme!, "291" 9 (November 1915), 2.

100. This adaptation of simultanism reveals the influence of de Zayas' scientific philosophy of art. In his criticism he had consistently maintained that art must have as an object something in the "real" world, preferably the "Form" that was its essence. De Zayas' bias in favour of the knowable may thus have helped to put a positivist slant on a medium that was already oriented toward the objective.

101. This element in these works also shows the influence of de Zayas' caricature, which was almost exclusively made up of portraits of individuals. This point is made in Francis Naumann, "Introduction," in de Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 97. De Zayas referred to his Simultanist works as "Psychotype."

102. De Zayas and Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 3.

103. Willard Bohn makes this point in Willard Bohn, "Marius de Zayas and Visual Poetry: 'Mental Reactions,'" Arts Magazine 55, no. 10 (June 1981), 4-7. It should be noted that the abstract, visual elements of the poem complicate the poem considerably. I do not agree with Bohn's interpretation of them in the aforementioned article.

104. Compare, for example, Apollinaire's "Lettre-Océan," which combines such mundane details as sirens, gramophones, shoes and bits of conversation with political slogans and the Eiffel tower transmitting messages to form "a telegraphic letter connecting the author with his brother Albert in Mexico." See Willard Bohn, The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17-24.

105. I do not want to suggest that everything in the magazine is bland. These examples appear together with much that is very strange indeed. For example Savinio's evocation of Verdi in his manifesto in No.4:

GIUSEPPE VERDI: forme douce et terrible...enrubanné de lanières polychromes. Animal d'étrange fidelite. Ses poumons en papiers rouge vif se détachaiant presque du thorax ainsi que les nageoires du poisson-hirondelle,-



ils sont exposés dans une devanture du Boulevard Saint-Germain. - Coeur et entrailles étaient multiflores. "Dammi l'Anathema, Cosa Lasciva," 291 4 (June 1915), 4.

(GIUSEPPE VERDI: soft in form, and horrible in size, ...beribboned with polychrome straps. Animal of strange loyalty. His lungs of red living paper nearly detached from the thorax like the fins of the swallow-fish are on display on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Heart and entrails are clustered with flowers.) [my translation]

106. "The Flower Show - Florists," 291 2 (April 1915), 1; "Color Music," 291 2 (April 1915), 1; "Being Human in New York," 291 3 (May 1915), 4; "Motherhood a Crime," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

107. Kerfoot, "Bunch," 4.

108. In its wry comment on the conditions of a well-off existence it resembles the cartoons that de Zayas produced for Puck. Compare, for example, de Zayas, "She 'Worked' Him For a Car," Puck 2 January 1915.

109. De Zayas and Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 3. The poem is discussed in Bohn, "Marius de Zayas and Visual Poetry," 4-7; Bohn, Visual Poetry, 185-203. Neither of these is very satisfactory.

110. In his poem "Le Musicien de Saint-Merry," Apollinaire suggested that poets make use of perfume labels. See note 96.

111. "The Academy," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

112. "Do Not Do Unto Others"; "Values in Art," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

113. "New Music"; "Modern Music"; "Color Music" 291 2 (April 1915), 1. Scriabin's "Prometheus" Symphony had received its world premiere at Carnegie Hall on March 20, 1915. The fact that the symphony was scored for orchestra and coloured lights made it especially interesting for the editors of 291. See James M. Baker, "'Prometheus' in America: The Significance of the World Premiere of Scriabin's 'Poem of Fire' as Color-Music, New York, 20 March 1915," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 90-109.

114. See note 94.

115. Kermit Champa notes: "Music was the modern rage in urban America, as much so as in France or England - nearly as much so as in Germany.... The power that music possessed in the American cultural marketplace would ultimately provide a confidence model for the introduction and practice of post-impressionist art in America." Kermit Champa, "Some Observation on American Art 1914-1919: 'The Wise or Foolish Virgin'" in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 11-23.



116. In these early issues of 291, two poems by Katherine Rhoades also dealt with the subject of music: Rhoades, "I Walked Into a Moment of Greatness...", 291 3 (May 1915), 2-3; Rhoades, "Flip-Flap," 291 4 (June 1915), 3.

117. "Motherhood a Crime," 291 2 (April 1915), 1; "Maternity," 291 3 (May 1915), 4.

118. "Motherhood a Crime," 1.

119. "Thumbs Down," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

120. Compare, of course, Marinetti's "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," which culminated in the description of a serious automobile accident.

121. "Modern Music," 1. The actual comparison with Savinio was made by means of a juxtaposition with the similarly titled article, "New Music," which described and praised the Italian composer's compositions. Savinio's music seems to have been a form of simultanism in that he incorporated into his pieces scraps of other music and noises of various kinds, and because their structure was based on drawings. The literature on Savinio is very limited and recordings of his music impossible to find.

122. "Watch Their Steps," 291 3 (May 1915), 4.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid. The reference is to the squeaking of the new shoes of the poet in "Lettre-Océan."

125. This is, of course, an example of what Pierre Bourdieu calls "aesthetic distancing": "The aesthete...whenever he appropriates one of the objects of popular tastes (eg. Westerns or strip cartoons), introduces a distance, a gap - the measure of his distant distinction - vis-à-vis 'first degree' perception, by displacing interest from the 'content,' characters, plot, etc., to the form, to the specifically artistic effects which are only appreciated relationally, through a comparison with other works which is incompatible with immersion in the singularity of the work immediately given." Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 34. I would also consider this article an example of the "feminisation" of mass culture described by Andreas Huyssen in "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 188-207.

126. Ibid, 191-95.

127. "Economic Laws and Art," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

128. See note 25.

129. The exhibition, however, did include work by Morton Schamberg and Henry Fitch Taylor, both of whom were working in quite sophisticated abstract styles. See Judith Zilczer, "'The World's New Art Center': Modern Art Exhibitions in New York



City, 1913-1918," *Archives of American Art* 14 (1974): 5.

130. "Economic Laws," 1.

131. *Ibid.*

132. *Ibid.*

133. The article was probably a part of the editors' ambition "to show how the game of art and its business was played." Stieglitz, "The Magazine '291,'" ASA. The abstract drawing by Picabia reproduced immediately below may have been intended as an illustration of authentic modern art.

134. "Ave Caesar Imperator!!! Morituri te Salutant!," *291* 3 (May 1915), 4.

135. *Ibid.*

136. *Ibid.*

137. Marius de Zayas, "New York, at first, did not see..." ("New York n'a pas vu d'abord..."), *291* 5/6 (July-August 1915), 6.

138. Francis Picabia, "Ici c'est Stieglitz foi et amour," "Canter," "Portrait d'une jeune fille Américaine dans l'état de nudité," "J'ai vu," "Voilà Haviland," *291* 5/6 (July-August 1915), 1-5.

139. The best account of Picabia's stay in New York is in Camfield, *Picabia*, 71-90. Late in 1915 Picabia made a very brief trip to either Cuba or Panama in order to fulfil his obligations to the French government.

140. One of his abstract drawings of New York dating from 1913 had already appeared in *291* 2 (April 1915), 1.

141. Francis Picabia, "Fille née sans mère," *291* 4 (June 1915), 2.

142. The drawing is discussed by: Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 80-81; and Borras, *Picabia*, 155. Many of the inscriptions on Picabia's machine drawings and paintings were taken, intact or slightly altered, from the pink pages of the *Petit Larousse* dictionary. Borras, *Picabia*, 155.

143. Inscriptions had already appeared on Picabia's abstract canvases, but not as such integrated and integral parts of the work.

144. I have been convinced by William Innes Homer's argument that the "Jeune fille Américaine dans l'état de nudité" is, in fact, Agnes Meyer. Her presence here rounds out the group portrait of the five "insiders" at "291." William Innes Homer, "Picabia's 'Jeune américaine dans l'état de nudité' and Her Friends," *Art Bulletin* 56, no. 1 (March 1975), 110-115.

145. The literature on the drawings is extensive. Among the more important



contributions: William Camfield, "The Machinist style of Francis Picabia," Art Bulletin 48 (1966), 309-322; Camfield, Francis Picabia, 77-85. Camfield has traced their sources in advertisements, and has shown that, unlike Duchamp's machines, Picabia's seem to function quite well on their own terms. Borras, Picabia, 155-56; Willard Bohn, "Abstract Vision," 447-51, who speculates about de Zayas' influence on Picabia; Homer, "Picabia's 'Jeune Fille,'" 110-15; Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 37-43; Marc Le Bot, "The Myth of the Machine," in Le Maccine Celibi/The Bachelor Machines, ed. Harald Szeemann (New York: Rizzoli, 1975), 172-79; Benjamin Buchloh, "Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop, and Sigmar Polke," Art Forum 20, no.7 (March 1982), 28-33.

146. Camfield, Picabia, 83-84.

147. Ibid, 82-83.

148. "French Artists Spur on American Art," New York Tribune 24 October 1915, sec. 4, 2-3. Reprinted in: New York Dada, ed. Robert E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker and Owens, 1986), 128-35.

149. Ibid, 131.

150. Ibid.

151. Ibid.

152. Gabrielle-Buffet Picabia, who joined her husband in New York in September or October of 1915, wrote about this period: "No sooner had we arrived than we became a part of a motley international band which turned night into day, conscientious objectors of all nationalities and walks of life living in an unconceivable orgy of sexuality, jazz, and alcohol. Scarcely escaped from the vice of martial law, we believed at first that we had returned to the blessed times of complete thought and action." Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories," 259. She also recalled that their first impressions were quickly dispelled.

153. This point has been convincingly argued in Camfield, Francis Picabia, 77-78; and Camfield, "Machanist Style," 313-14.

154. Although the sparkplug is probably a portrait of Agnes Meyer, it also constitutes a comment by Picabia on all American "girls." In his novel, Caravanserail, Picabia later wrote: "But the magnificent body of the American woman, who plays golf, dances, swims, drives a car, but doesn't know how to make love - that's why they invented flirtation." Quoted in Bohn, "Abstract Vision," 450. For an interpretation see Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 38.

155. "New York, at first, did not see..." has not been adequately discussed, but see: Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 40-43. According to Tashjian, de Zayas "claimed that given the conditions of rapid cultural and social change, history in America had become meaningless, so that the American artist ought to forget history - the traditions out of which European art was derived - and create his own indigenous art. But American art could not exist because of the peculiar cultural and social flux, the results of creation



had necessarily to be either anti-art or non-art.” Tashjian ignores de Zayas’ deep commitment, expressed in this essay and elsewhere, to the importance of art as it was “traditionally” conceived.

156. De Zayas, “New York,” 6.

157. Ibid. That American “gentility” and concern with things European had precluded “contact” with American realities was a common complaint in the period. Among more important examples are: George Santayana, “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” Winds of Doctrine (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913.), 186-215; Van Wyck Brooks, America’s Coming of Age (New York: Huebsch, 1914); Romain Rolland, “America and the Arts,” Seven Arts (November 1916), 47; Robert J. Coady, “American Art,” The Soil 1, no. 1 (December 1916), 3-4.; Waldo Frank, Our America (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919; William Carlos Williams, “Contact,” Contact 1 (December 1920), 1; Paul Rosenfeld, Port of New York, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924). Not all these writers were as enthusiastic as de Zayas about the machine and its effects. For discussions of this trend: Dickran Tashjian, William Carlos Williams and the American Scene 1920-1940 (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978), 14-73; Lisa M. Steinman, Made in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 17-34; Matthew Baigell, “American Art and National Identity: The 1920s,” Arts Magazine 61, no. 6 (February 1987), 48-55; Wanda M. Corn, “Toward a Native Art,” Wilson Quarterly (Summer 1981), 166-77; and, with relation to the Stieglitz circle in a slightly later period: Wanda M. Corn, “Apostles of the New Art: Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld,” Arts Magazine 54 (February 1980), 159-63.

158. De Zayas, “New York,” 6.

159. Ibid.

160. Ibid. In his memoir from the 1940s de Zayas expressed embarrassment with these opinions and offered a retraction of a sort: “I was wrong and unjust in saying all those things. As far as artists are concerned, the Photo-Secession had results or at least one result in John Marin.” De Zayas, “How, When, and Why,” 116.

161. De Zayas, “New York,” 6.

162. Ibid.

163. The last key on Kerfoot’s “chain” is made up of the words, “Don’t you wish you knew?” implying a romantic liaison of some kind. Kerfoot, “Bunch,” 4.

164. De Zayas, “New York,” 6.

165. Picabia’s machine drawings, and the machine paintings that followed, did have a considerable influence on American art, most notably on the work of Morton Schamberg. See Zabel, “Machine as Metaphor,” 100-05; Jan Thompson, “Picabia and His Influence on American Art, 1913-17,” Art Journal 34, no. 1 (Fall 1979), 15-21; William C. Agee, Morton Livingston Schamberg (New York: Sandler-O’Reilly Galleries, Inc., 1982), 12-13.



166. Timothy Rodgers has noted that Stieglitz's enthusiasm for "American" art was not strongly in evidence until after World War I. Rodgers, "False Memories," 59-66.

167. De Zayas' Modern Gallery, which opened on October 7, 1915, also showed relatively little American art until 1917. See list of exhibitions at Modern Gallery in Eva Epp Runk, "Marius de Zayas: The New York Years" (MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1973), 69-73.

168. For correspondence that mentions mailings of 291 to Europe see note 71. Especially revealing is Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 August 1915, ASA, which states: "We sent to Paris 60 copies of the last two numbers to people who have a real interest in modern art." The fashionable magazine Smart Set, which was intended for American readers, also ran a monthly column in French. "Whether these stories were widely read is not clear, but this French connection also tended to bring the magazine contributions from other European writers, not only French, but sophisticated European emigrants recently arrived in America, and other established authors who previously had no outlets in America." George H. Douglas, The Smart Magazines (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1991), 20.

169. De Zayas, "New York," 6.

170. Ibid.

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid.

173. Ibid.

174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.

176. That the machine and its operation could be abstracted from its social and economic contexts and appreciated for their own sake has been frequently noted. See Steinmann, Made in America, 35-56; Cecilia Tichi, Shifting Gears, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 231-87; Marianne Doezeema, "The Clean Machine: Technology in American Magazine Illustration," Journal of American Culture 11, no. 4 (1988), 73-91. Rather extreme examples were the illustrations of machines in Robert Coady's magazine, The Soil, published in New York 1916-17.

177. Marius de Zayas to Agnes Meyer, 15 July 1915, AMP.

178. Ibid.

179. Ibid.

180. Ibid.



181. These elements in 291 have often been noted but never accounted for. See Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 33-34, 38-46; Bohn, "Marius de Zayas and Visual Poetry," 4.

182. Katherine Rhoades, untitled drawing, 291 2 (April 1915), 2.

183. Marius Zayas and Agnes Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 291 2 (April 1915), 2.

184. Katherine Rhoades, "I walked into a moment of greatness....," 291 3 (May 1915), 2-3; Rhoades, "Flip-Flap," 291 4 (June 1915), 3.

185. Agnes Meyer, "Woman," 291 3 (May 1915), 2-3.

186. Francis Picabia, "Fille née sans mère," 291 4 (June 1915), 2; Picabia, "object-portraits," 291 Nos. 5/6 (July-August 1915), 1-5.

187. Marius de Zayas, "New York, at first, did not see....," 291 5/6 (July-August 1915), 6.

188. Paul Haviland, "We are living in the age....," 291 7/8 (September- October 1915), 1.

189. Francis Picabia, "Voilà Elle," 291 9 (November 1915), 3; Marius de Zayas, "Femme!," 291 9 (November 1915), 2.

190. Forgive me for discussing the tendency towards greater sexual freedom and the women's movement together, but they were frequently connected in the minds of contemporaries. See Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987), 42-50.

191. James R. McGovern, "The American Woman's Pre-World War I Freedom in Manners and Morals," Assault on Victorianism, ed. John N. Ingham (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1987), 95. Also: Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 38-68; Henry F. May, The End of American Innocence, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 349-47; Allen Churchill, The Improper Bohemians (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1959), 158-161.

192. "Sex Fable," Puck, 4 July 1914, 19.

193. Madeline Gray, Margaret Sanger (New York; Richard Marek Publishers, 1979), 67-120.

194. The Masses Women's Citizenship Number (November 1915); Puck 20 February 1915; New Republic 9 October 1915, Part Two. On the suffrage campaign: Doris Daniels, "Building a Winning Coalition: The Suffrage Fight in New York State," New York History 60, no. 1 (January 1979), 59-80.

195. On what sex meant in Greenwich Village: Robert E. Humphrey, Children of Fantasy (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), 217-232; Arthur Frank Wertheim, The New York Little Renaissance (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 79-



96; Leslie Fishbein, "Freud and the Radicals: Sex Comes to Greenwich Village," The Canadian Review of American Studies 12, no. 2 (Fall 1981), 173-89; Ellen Kay Trimberger, "Feminism, Men, and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900-1925," in Powers of Desire, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 131-52.

196. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Puritanism, Its Grandeur and Shame," Camera Work 32 (October 1910), 18-19. Hartmann himself was known, for a time, as the "King of Greenwich Village."

197. Hutchins Hapgood, "In Memoriam," Camera Work 39 (July 1912), after 49. Stieglitz himself was deeply opposed to censorship on the grounds that it inhibited free expression. See Alfred Stieglitz to Guido Bruno, 28 December 1915, ASA: "As for the Comstockian society: all I can say is that the idea underlying it has always given me the creeps. As it must give the creeps to everyone who has the slightest concept of freedom of expression, of art, of intellectual integrity. Of the reality of life itself."

198. "Motherhood a Crime," 291 2 (April 1915), 1.

199. Eugene Brieux, "Maternity," in Brieux, Three Plays by Brieux, trans. Mrs. Bernard Shaw (London: A. C. Fifield, 1917), 1-69. 249-321.

200. Agnes Meyer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

201. On Walkowitz and Duncan: Martica Sawin, Abraham Walkowitz (Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, 1974), 10; Marie Clifford, "Drawing on Women: Representations of Women and Suffrage Imagery in The Masses, 1913-1917," (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1991), 56-67. Sawin comments: "[Duncan] was Walkowitz's exact contemporary and her equation of bodily expression with purity of spirit paralleled his own ideas about artistic freedom: unhampered spontaneity was pure, it was creative and therefore it could not fail to be art." Some very similar drawings of Walkowitz's drawings of Duncan, who gave a performance in New York in 1915, were later published in the socialist magazine, The Masses.

202. Very little information on this issue is provided by letters. It is probably the "Walkowitz number" referred to in Marius de Zayas to Agnes Meyer, 15 July 1915, AMP. For an unspecified reason the number had "brought another crisis at 291," that called their "future as a group" into question. From this evidence, I assume that the issue was to have appeared in July, but was replaced by the Picabia double issue, Nos. 5/6 (July-August, 1915).

203. See Douglas, Smart Magazines, 20.

204. De Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 98. On the "prurience" of European modernism in the eyes of conservative critics: H. Wayne Morgan, New Muses: Art in American Culture, 1865-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 163-64.

205. J. N. Laurvik, review of Rodin exhibition at "291," New York Times, 1915.



Quoted in de Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 98. Arthur Symons' catalogue introduction for this exhibition, did, in fact, emphasise the sexual aspects of the drawings. Reprinted in: "The Rodin Drawings at the Photo-Secession Galleries," Camera Work 22 (April 1908), 35.

206. See reviews reprinted in Camera Work 30 (April 1910), 48-53.

207. De Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 98. This was written in the 1940s, of course.

208. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 7 September 1913, ASA.

209. Appearance of sexually explicit material with an avant-garde twist in 291 has a quite close parallel in the publication of Mina Loy's "Love Songs" by Arthur Kreyemborg's literary magazine Others. About these poems, a sort of sexually explicit high modernism in which a woman bared her innermost thoughts, Kreyemborg later recalled:

In an unsophisticated land, such sophistry, clinical frankness, sardonic conclusions, wedded to a madly elliptical style...horrified our gentry and drove our critics into nervous despair. The nudity of emotion and thought roused the worst disturbance, and the utter nonchalance in revealing the secrets of sex was denounced as no less than lewd." Arthur Kreyemborg, Our Singing Strength. Quoted in Roger L. Conover, "Introduction" in Mina Loy, The Last Lunar Baedeker, ed. R. Conover (Highlands: The Jargon Society, 1982), xxxvi-xxxvii.

The second poem, the subject of which is male "genius" seen from a woman's point of view, has much in common with Meyer's "Mental Reactions." The man in Loy's poem is

The skin sack  
In which a wanton duality  
Packed  
All the completions of my infructuous impulses  
Something the shape of a man...  
My fingertips are numb from fretting your hair  
A God's doormat  
On the threshold of your mind.

The poems are also similar in that they seem both to have come out of their author's experiences with an artistic avant-garde, in Loy's case with Marinetti and the Futurists. Unlike "Mental Reactions," however, the "Love Poems" caused quite a sensation, and made Others known in New York and elsewhere. Publication of similar work nevertheless demonstrates considerable prescience on the part of the editors of 291. On Mina Loy and the Futurists: Carolyn Burke, "Becoming Mina Loy," Women's Studies 7 (1980), 140-48.

210. Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius (London: The Women's Press, 1989), 71-80, 120-22. Usage in the Stieglitz circle is briefly noted by Lynes, O'Keeffe, 20;



and Borras, Picabia, 154.

211. See chapter one, note 161.

212. Benjamin de Casseras, "The Brain and the World," Camera Work 31 (July 1910), 28.

213. Katherine Rhoades, "- 'There is Always a 'More' - A Greater Vision - A Greater Realisation' -" Camera Work 47 (July 1914, published January 1915), 55-56.

214. Oscar Bluemner, "Auditor et Altera Pars: Some Plain Sense on the Modern Art Movement," Camera Work, Special Number (June 1913), 25.

215. John Weichsel, "Cosmism and Amorphism," Camera Work 42-43 (April-July 1913, published November 1913), 71.

216. De Zayas, "New York," 6.

217. Haviland, "We are living in the age...," 1.

218. The presence of European style erotic material in 291 was, I believe, also a means of "sexing" America for the benefit of Americans and Europeans alike. Both at home and abroad, American culture was thought rather genteel and staid, an impression that the editors of 291 must have felt it desirable to correct.

219. Guillaume Apollinaire, The Cubist Painters, trans. Lionel Abel (New York: George Wittenborn, 1970), 23. This kind of language was exceedingly common in the period. See, for example, Gabrielle Buffet's description of pre-war activity: "We were convinced of the arbitrariness and falsity of our poor creation, the world. And yet, in our striving for a new gestation, we were none the less compelled to seek a new arbitrary principle, which we had to manufacture out of the whole cloth, with no other tools but trust - to chance or intuition." Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories," 255.

220. Shattuck, Banquet Years, 304-05; Scott Bates, Guillaume Apollinaire (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967), 133-34.

221. Shattuck, Banquet Years, 266-67, Margaret Davies, Apollinaire (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), 196.

222. Bates, Guillaume Apollinaire, 137.

223. For a discussion: Camfield, Francis Picabia, 69.

224. Ibid, 66-67.

225. This pantomime has been the subject of a book: Willard Bohn, Apollinaire and the Faceless Man: The Creation and Evolution of a Modern Motif (London: Associated University Press, 1991). Bohn discusses sources of the imagery used in the work and its influence, but does not provide great insight into its themes.



226. Ibid, 68. A translation of the pantomime script is provided in: ibid, 55-58.

227. Savinio was obsessed by some of these same themes. His dramatic poem, Les Chants de la mi-mort, published in Les Soirées de Paris in the July-August 1914 issue, "dramatizes a whole series of themes generated by problems associated with sexuality. These include: the father's jealousy, which mirrors the mother's and leads him to denounce the son; the father's conspicuous voyeurism, which is related to the theme of repressed sexuality; the son's vengeance directed against his parents, which alternates with his love for them; and the conflict between sexual satisfaction and society's approval." Ibid, 83.

228. Ibid, 28; Davies, Apollinaire, 227-28.

229. The document is in the Marius de Zayas Archives, Seville, Spain. Translated in Bohn, Faceless Man, 65.

230. Ibid.

231. Katherine Rhoades, untitled drawing, 291 2 (April 1915), 2. The literature on Rhoades is very limited. There is a short biographical note in: Homer, Alfred Stieglitz, 313. Several hundred of the letters she wrote to Stieglitz between 1913 and 1917 are preserved in the Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Beinecke Library, New Haven, Conn. Rhoades' handwriting is, unfortunately, almost illegible. Most of her paintings have been destroyed.

232. This, at least, is the conclusion I draw from the letters noted above. Stieglitz's letters to Rhoades do not survive and were probably destroyed by Rhoades herself.

233. Hyland, Conjurer of Souls, 122. See also: Craig R, Bailey, "The Art of Marius de Zayas," Arts Magazine 53, no. 1 (September 1978), 42. Turn the Rhoades drawing sideways and it looks like a gun.

234. The poem is discussed in: Bohn, Visual Poetry, 185-203; Bohn, "Marius de Zayas and Visual Poetry," 4-7; Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 33-34. Bohn believes that the abstract elements of the work can be interpreted as a lighthouse and moth, representing the man and woman respectively. His reading of "Mental Reactions" in Visual Poetry is quite convincing, but is marred by the assumption that the woman in the poem is Agnes Meyer herself, and by a failure to take into account its feminist elements.

235. The poem was probably influenced by Meyer's experiences in artistic circles in Europe and the United States. Meyer, who enjoyed flirting with men, could, however, more than hold her own in these encounters. The use of women by men as "introductions to themselves" was very common in intellectual and bohemian circles, and even formed the basis of a considerable amount of literature. See Trimberger, "Feminism, Men, and Modern Love," 131-149; Humphrey, Children of Fantasy, 221-26. In 1920 Floyd Dell, bohemian arch-lover, observed that "men are interested in themselves - in their own reactions to women - much more than in the women." Floyd Dell, Homecoming: An Autobiography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), 240. Quoted in Trimberger, 144.



236. Compare again Mina Loy's "Love Songs" about which Carolyn Burke writes: "This passionately clinical analysis of a failed love affair from the woman's perspective shocked readers because it violated the thematic and formal conventions for poetic speech by women. Steinian in her extreme abandonment of punctuation, connectives, and familiar syntactic structures, Loy arranged her phrases with a painter's eye for their shapes on the page and a post-Bergsonian sense of experience as a fragmented process reflected in the speakers's consciousness." Burke identifies this as a specifically feminist project. Carolyn Burke, "Without Commas: Gertrude Stein and Mina Loy," *Poetics Journal* 4 (May 1984), 50.

237. De Zayas and Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 3.

238. Dickran Tashjian notes a similarity between the woman in the poem and the protagonist of T. S. Eliot's "The Lovesong of Alfred J. Prufrock," a poem that was published in the same year. Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, 34.

239. De Zayas and Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 3.

240. Ibid. The reference to an "experiment" suggests that the poem describes an encounter that took place in the Stieglitz circle, a place where "experiments" of an artistic nature were also carried out.

241. I would speculate that "Mental Reactions" and other writing by women in 291 was, in fact, published with a female readership in mind. A large number of the habitues of "291," and other artistic and bohemian coteries where the magazine was read, were women, many of whom would have had experiences similar to that of the woman in the poem.

242. De Zayas, note on "A Quelle Heure." See note 229.

243. Katherine Rhoades, "I walked into a moment of greatness...," 291 3 (May 1915), 2-3.

244. Katherine Rhoades, "Flip-Flap," 291 4 (June 1915), 3. The poem is briefly discussed in: Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, 36-37. The opera Rhoades attended, Wagner's "Die Meistersinger von Nuremberg," is, of course, about a competition between male singers, the winner of which gets the girl.

245. Rhoades, "I walked into...," 2-3.

246. Ibid.

247. Rhoades, "Flip-Flap," 3. The Flip-Flap was a midway ride that lifted people up from one place and deposited them in another.

248. Ibid. Can she also be referring to "291" here?

249. Ibid.



250. Ibid.

251. Ibid. These words, "stifled," "repression," would seem to have Freudian overtones.

252. In his letter on the "situation" at "291" dated July 15, 1915, shortly after Meyer had had her child, de Zayas wrote: "I suppose you are now giving your attention to something far more important than Art and its evolution." Nevertheless, he informed her at length about his thoughts on "291."

253. There are fewer letters from Rhoades to Stieglitz in ASA after August, 1915.

254. De Zayas appears to have become the controlling force in 291 during the summer of 1915. On July 24, 1915 Stieglitz wrote to Meyer, probably with reference to 291: "Just at present the most important thing is to give De Zayas a full chance. He is entitled to it and I believe in what he is doing. - As for the gallery it will be taken care of as occasion warrants." Alfred Stieglitz to Agnes Meyer, 24 July 1915, AMP.

255. This was, of course, the period in which Ezra Pound was attempting to take control of literary magazines, many of them edited by women, of which he was contributing editor.

256. Katherine Rhoades to Alfred Stieglitz, 10 July 1915, ASA.

257. Katherine Rhoades to Alfred Stieglitz, 30 July 1915, ASA.

258. Ibid. In this letter Rhoades offered a sort of parody of the inscriptions on the drawings to explain what they meant to her. She also declared herself opposed to Picabia's version of "science": "Why should living with and learning from seeds and plants - watching them grow and blossom, make the science expression [sic] of our life or thought, seem lacking in the natural element of life? It shouldn't be so - that's why I wonder if it is science?"

259. For male artists and writers the whole avant-garde project was usually coded as hard and masculine, with the soft, sentimental "feminine" as its undesirable other. See Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman," 188-207. Ezra Pound, who once described himself as "driving" a "new idea into the great passive vulva of London," was an egregious example from the English speaking world. Carolyn Burke, "Getting Spliced: Modernism and Sexual Difference," American Quarterly 39 (Spring 1987), 104; also Lisa Tickner, "Now and Then: The Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound," The Oxford Art Journal, 16, no. 2 (1993), 55-61. On the visual arts see: Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting," in Feminism and Art History, eds. N. Broude and M. Garrard (New York: Harper and Row), 1982), 292-313. In the United States: Jenny Anger and David A. Brenneman, "Music and the Aesthetic of Masculine Order, As Proposed by A. J. Eddy and W. H. Wright," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 78-89.

260. J.-K. Huysmans, Against Nature (A Rebours) trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), 36-37; Alfred Jarry, The Supermale (Le



Surmâle) trans. Ralph Gladstone and Barbara Wright (New York: New Directions, 1977); Villiers d'Isle Adam, L'Ève future (Paris: M. De Brunoff, 1886). See also: Emile Zola, La bête humaine.

261. Camfield, Francis Picabia, 77-79.

262. By inducting the makers of machines into the ranks of artists, Picabia was able to annex vast fields of science and engineering to his own specialty.

263. Myths of male autogenesis have a long history in European culture, going back to the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus and Eve from Adams rib. In the nineteenth century the machine was incorporated into these myths, from whence they entered twentieth century avant-garde mythology. Andreas Huyssen writes, with reference to Rotwang's creation of the female robot, Maria, in Fritz Lang's film Metropolis: "...as soon as the machine came to be perceived as a demonic, inexplicable threat and as the harbinger of chaos and destruction...writers began to imagine the Maschinenmenschen as woman. There are grounds to suspect that we are facing here a complex process of projection and displacement. The fears and perceptual anxieties emanating from ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality, reflecting, in the Freudian account, the male's castration anxiety." Huyssen notes that the robot is "not just any life, but woman herself, the epitome of nature. The nature/culture split seems healed. The most complete technologization of nature appears as renaturalisation, as a process back to nature. Man is at long last alone and at one with himself." Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis," New German Culture 24-25 (Fall-Winter 1981-82), 221-237. I would speculate that the presence of similar creatures in 291 magazine also betrays a fear of the business culture that brought machinery into being, and that they function as fetishes in this context as well.

264. Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 38.

265. In the United States this sort of masculinisation of modern artistic endeavour was hardly unique to the Stieglitz circle. Arthur Jerome Eddy in Cubists and Post-Impressionists and Willard (1914) Huntington Wright in Modern Painting (1915) similarly made distinctions between avant-garde embodiments of virility and imitative, decorative feminine styles. "For Americans concerned with the advancement and promotion of the visual arts at the time, there was a built in insecurity factor, something for which they were inclined to compensate with assertions of masculinity." These points are made in Anger and Brenneman, "Music and the Aesthetic of Masculine Order," 78-89.

266. De Zayas, "New York," 6.

267. Ibid.

268. Ibid.

269. "Simultanism," 291 1 (May 1915), 1. On the feminisation of the public: Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman," 188-207.



270. "Unilaterals," 291 1 (March 1915), 2. See also note 59.

271. In the course of his argument, de Zayas condemns the use of "shields" in the artist's metaphoric union with America, thus identifying himself with the reactionary side in the birth control debate. Such an appropriation would seem to be in contradiction to the earlier advocacy of women's reproductive rights in the magazine (ie.: "Motherhood a Crime"). De Zayas' use of this metaphor in the essay suggests that these earlier articles were, in fact, published mainly with their publicity value in mind.

272. De Zayas, "New York," 6.

273. *Ibid.*

274. *Ibid.* At other times, however, de Zayas apparently did call it "rape." Rodrigo de Zayas told Leslie Cohen in 1971 that his father had referred to the education of the public as "the rape of the American consciousness." Leslie Cohen, "Marius de Zayas and the Modern Art Movement in New York" (MA thesis, Queen's College, City University of New York, 1973), 3. In 1916 Picabia wrote from Barcelona: "The intellectuals here are cold-blooded, they prefer onanism to rape...." Quoted in Borras, Picabia, 174.

275. Marius de Zayas to Agnes Meyer, 15 July 1915, AMP.

276. De Zayas, "New York," 6.

277. Agnes Meyer to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 August 1915, ASA.

278. Stieglitz always encouraged his associates to be "frank" with him, and the word was used frequently in their correspondence. After he broke with Meyer and de Zayas in late 1915 or early 1916, however, he wrote to Meyer: "I regret deeply that both you and de Zayas should feel that I have not been frank with you. Perhaps too great frankness all these years has been the cause of all this mess, for mess it is." Alfred Stieglitz to Agnes Meyer, 11 February (1916), AMP.

279. Agnes Meyer to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 August 1915, ASA.

280. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 2 September, 1915, ASA.

281. Agnes Meyer to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 August 1915, ASA

282. Alfred Stieglitz to Agnes Meyer, 29 August 1915, AMP.

283. The Modern Gallery and its founding have been discussed in: Hyland, Conjurer of Souls, 46-49; Cohen, "Marius de Zayas," 49-72; Lowe, Stieglitz, 199-200; Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 123-251, 36-38. De Zayas provided his own account in "How, When, and Why," 116-18, which reads, in part: "Most of the French artists had become soldiers. It was known that the art market in Paris was practically closed. An altruistic spirit invaded the Photo-Secession, inspiring the idea that the "moderns" should be helped in some way, most particularly those artists whose work had been shown at the Photo Secession for "experimental purposes" only."



284. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 27 August 1915, Marius de Zayas Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York (photocopy). Hereafter referred to as MDZP. The other letter is: Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 1 September 1915, MDZP (photocopy). Some of the letters exchanged by the two men are also in ASA.

285. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 26 August 1915, MDZP (photocopy).

286. Ibid.

287. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 31 August 1915, MDZP (photocopy), was also full of good, practical advice.

288. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 23 August 1915, ASA.

289. Paul Rosenberg and de Zayas' brother, George, also collected works in Paris for display at the Modern Gallery. Leavens '291' to Zurich, 125.

290. J. B. Kerfoot, another long-time "291" associate, played an advisory role in the gallery's founding. Francis Picabia was another one of its backers.

291. "'291' and the Modern Gallery," Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 63-64. Note the use of the generative term.

292. Announcement for the Modern Gallery, insert into: 291 9 (November 1915).

293. Ibid.

294. The exhibition was on display October (16) through November 13, 1915. These dates and those that follow taken from : Runk, "Appendix II: Modern Gallery Exhibition Schedule," in "Marius de Zayas," 69-73.

295. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 1 September 1915, MDZP photocopy).

296. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 23 August, 1915, ASA. See also Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas 26 August 1915, MDZP (photocopy).

297. According to Stieglitz, "The Steerage" played an important role in the development of his "straight" method of photography. To Dorothy Norman he related how he had taken the picture under conditions of great excitement on a trip to Europe in 1907, and developed it with much care in Paris the same year. Alfred Stieglitz, "Four Happenings," Twice-A-Year 8-9 (Spring-Summer 1942/Fall-Winter 1942), 127-131. Recently, evidence has come to light that suggests Stieglitz fabricated the entire incident, and that he actually laid the photograph aside until its quality was pointed out to him by Max Weber. See James S. Terry, "The Problem of 'The Steerage,'" History of Photography 6, no. 3 (July 1982), 211-22.

298. These articles are mentioned in: Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 23 August 1915, ASA.



299. Meyer was also to have contributed an article to the issue, but it was never completed. See Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 30 August 1915, ASA.

300. Marius de Zayas "Femme!," 291 9 (November 1915), 2; Francis Picabia "Voilà Elle," 291 9 (November 1915), 3.

301. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 23 August 1915, ASA.

302. Other interpretation are offered in : Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 136-37.

303. Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 31 August 1915, MDZP.

304. There is a list of art editors of major New York newspapers on the carbon of the letter announcing the gallery opening sent to Elizabeth Luther Carey of the New York Times. Alfred Stieglitz to New York Times, no date (probably October 1915), ASA. Stieglitz also wrote about the gallery to his old friend Charles Caffin, art reviewer for the New York American. Alfred Stieglitz to Charles Caffin, 4 October 1915, ASA. He sent a "Steerage" issue to Charles Freer on November 1. Alfred Stieglitz to Charles Freer, 1 November 1915, ASA.

305. Alfred Stieglitz to Ezra Pound, 3 November 1915, ASA. 291 was, in fact, reviewed in The Egoist: Huntley Carter, "Two-Nine-One," The Egoist 3, no. 3 (1 March 1916), 43.

306. Sue Davidson Lowe writes, without citing her sources, that, in the spring of 1915, "Alfred was heavily engaged...in perfecting the gravures of his The Steerage that would crown the new magazine's September issue." Lowe, Stieglitz, 198.

307. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 31 August 1915, ASA; Alfred Stieglitz to Marius de Zayas, 26 August 1915, MDZP (photocopy).

308. Marius de Zayas, "In 1907, Stieglitz..." 291 7/8 (September-October 1915), 1.

309. Ibid.

310. Paul Haviland, "We are living in the age..." 291 7/8 (September-October 1915), 1.

311. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 26/27 March 1914, ASA. Stieglitz was very proud of this praise.

312. De Zayas, "In 1907," 1. Tashjian takes de Zayas' disparagement of "Art, that idiotic word," as evidence of a Dada attitude on his part. I would argue that de Zayas' aspersions are directed at such aspects of "Art" as "Conventional Beauty" that had prevented the production of true "art." He rejects art to receive it back again, more truthful and more powerful than before. Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 44-45.

313. Marius de Zayas, "Photography," Camera Work 41 (January 1913), 17-20; Marius de Zayas, "Photography and Artistic-Photography," Camera Work 42-43



(April-July 1913, published November 1913), 13-14. In a letter to de Zayas, Stieglitz objected to what de Zayas had written about him in 291, even though the opinions expressed differed little from what de Zayas had said in his earlier essays. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz, 17 December 1915, ASA. Stieglitz appears to have felt that de Zayas had not given him enough credit for his work on behalf of photography in the United States.

314. De Zayas, "In 1907," 1.

315. Haviland, "We are living," 1.

316. In this regard, see Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine," 219-237, quoted in note 263; a similar complex of associations can, apparently, be found in Zola's novel, La bête humaine. See Dorothy Kelly, "Gender, Metaphor, and Machine: La bête humaine," French Literature Series 16 (1989), 110-22.

317. Haviland, "We are living," 1.

318. Ibid.

319. Ibid.

320. Huyssen, "Vamp and the Machine," 227.

321. It should be noted that when the essay was published Haviland had already returned to France.

322. These works are briefly discussed in: Bailey, "Art of Marius de Zayas," 42, who notes the similarity of "Femme!" to certain Futurist works; Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 136-37; and Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives, 45-46. My interpretation of Picabia's "Voilà Elle" most resembles that offered in Bohn, "Abstract Vision," 451; and Camfield, Francis Picabia, 84-85.

323. "Exhibitions at the Galleries," Arts and Decoration, 6 November 1915, 35.

324. Katherine Rhoades to Alfred Stieglitz, 1 August 1915, ASA.

325. De Zayas, "Femme!," 2.

326. This is, of course, another femme-fatale. Compare Stieglitz, "One Hour's Sleep," in 291 No. 1.

327. "Exhibitions at the Galleries," 35. In 1915, the editors of Smart Set founded a magazine intended for an American audience that was also devoted to French literature of a kind. George H. Douglas comments: "Taking advantage of a current infatuation for all things French in 1915, including the ever-persistent American belief that French stories are inevitably 'naughty,' [H. L. Mencken and George Nathan] began another sideline venture called Parisienne, the title being what Mencken called 'boob bait'.... George H. Douglas, The Smart Magazines (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1991), 77-78. The magazine was more successful than the Smart Set itself.



328. De Zayas and Meyer, "Mental Reactions," 3; De Zayas, "Femme!," 2.

329. This was, of course, also the period of the women's suffrage movement, which inspired fear in many men, including male artists. See Duncan, "Virility and Domination," 303. Anger and Brenneman, "Music and the Aesthetic of Masculine Order," 84-85, for similar responses by other artists and critics.

330. Interestingly, there are also marked resemblances between the alluring yet defiant woman pictured in "Femme!" and the art hating America de Zayas criticised so severely in "New York, at first, did not see...":

...[Stieglitz] has not succeeded in putting in motion *the enormous mass of this public's self-sufficiency*. America has not the slightest conception of the value of the work accomplished by Stieglitz. *Success, and success on a large scale*, is the only thing that can make an impression on American mentality. *Any effort, any tendency, which does not possess the radiation of advertising remains practically ignored.* [my italics]

Woman and public were both shown to be equally materialistic and self-regarding, and thus further associated with one another.

331. Marius de Zayas, "Picasso," 291 10/11 (December 1915- January 1916), 2.

332. Max Jacob, "La vie artistique," 291 Nos. 10/11 (December 1915- January 1916), 4; Jacob, "La vie artistique," 291 12 (February 1915), 4.

333. Marius de Zayas to Alfred Stieglitz 1 September 1915, MDZP.

334. Francis Picabia, "Fantaisie," 291 10/11 (December 1915-January 1916), 3; Picabia, "Portrait Max Jacob," 291 10/11 (December 1915-January 1916), 4; Picabia, "We live in a world...," 291 12 (February 1915), 3.

335. Marius de Zayas, "Modern Art...Negro Art," 291 12 (February 1915), 2.

336. In comparison with the fall shows at the Modern gallery, those at "291" were by relatively unknown artists. Oscar Bluemner was exhibited November 10-December 7. Elie Nadelman, December 8-January 19.

337. The ambiguity stems from the fact that Picabia's abstract paintings and his machine works both had as their rationale the Symbolist theory of correspondance. Hence (obscure) statements such as the following, which could apply to either style: "We create first an objectivity to put [the abstract idea] in, afterward our subjective will; our work then becomes the mental and metaphysical expression of the outer world - that is to say, it becomes an object living by itself and with its own expression." Picabia, "We live in a world," 3.

338. Mrs. a Roosevelt, "Tennis Player - Serving," 3.

339. Katherine Rhoades, "Narcosis," 291 12 (February 1915), 2.



340. Ibid.

341. Some idea of the magazine's reputation in France can be had from a letter written by Haviland to Stieglitz from France on March 15, 1916: "As to '291' I haven't seen a number in a hell of a while....Picasso and Jacob were complaining in January that they had not seen any of the numbers where they had heard their work had appeared." Paul Haviland to Alfred Stieglitz 15 March 1916, ASA.

342. Georges Ribemont Dessaaignes, "Musique," 291 10/11 (December 1915-January 1916), 3.

343. In this regard see Hyland, Conjurer, 44. See also note 168.

344. "Arensberg included both people and pictures in a constantly rotating display. His apartment was a perpetual 'opening' for a multitude of French and American guests." Judith Tolnick, "Collecting American Modernism and Modernists," in Over Here: Modernism, The First Exile 1914-1919, ed. Kermit Champa (Providence: David Winton Bell Gallery, 1989), 55. There was, of course, considerable exchange of personnel between Arensberg's apartment and "291."

345. De Zayas, "How, When, and Why," 117.



## **Epilogue**



In spite of de Zayas' lack of commercial acumen, his activities at the Modern Gallery seem to have offended Stieglitz all the same. Late in 1915 or early in 1916 an altercation of some kind occurred between de Zayas and Meyer on the one side and Stieglitz on the other. The precise reasons for the disagreement were never revealed, but the issue in question seems to have been the conduct of business at the Modern Gallery.<sup>1</sup> Stieglitz set out a version of his view of the matter in a series of photographs and articles published in the October, 1916 issue of Camera Work, the first to appear in almost two years. At the back of the issue he included five items that seem designed to tell his side of the story: 1) a short note on 291 magazine, probably written by de Zayas, 2) a reprint of the unreleased Modern Gallery announcement, 3) a series of very beautiful photographs of exhibitions at "291," dating from 1906 through 1915, 4) a reprint of de Zayas' essay "New York, at first, did not see...," which had, of course, taken Stieglitz thoroughly to task for his supposed failure to introduce modern art to America, and, 5) a little poem by Marsden Hartley, entitled "Epitaph for Alfred Stieglitz," that read:

Question not  
My soul's demise  
My friends consult  
The query is the answer.  
To my peace.<sup>2</sup>

Although publication of this material ostensibly provided readers with an opportunity to compare Stieglitz's work on behalf of modern art with that of de Zayas and his associates, the presentation was, in fact, quite slanted towards Stieglitz's point of view. Juxtaposition of de Zayas' essay and the beautiful photographs of "291" constituted a rebuttal in visual terms of de Zayas' claim that Stieglitz had "failed." Publication of the epitaph seems to have been a piece of false modesty on Stieglitz's part: since such "friends" as de Zayas and Meyer had told him he was "dead," he must be, even though the photographic evidence pointed the other way. The only editorial comment in the



series came at the end of the Modern Gallery announcement, which had, of course, linked the new place closely with "291," and had stated that business there would be conducted on terms beneficial to both artists and public. Stieglitz explained that

Mr. De Zayas, after experimenting for three months on the lines contemplated, found that practical business in New York and '291' were incompatible. In consequence he suggested that '291' and the Modern gallery be separated. The suggestion automatically constituted a separation.<sup>3</sup>

These snide remarks implied that de Zayas had engaged in shady business dealings at the Modern Gallery, and that he and Meyer had been ostracised for this reason. De Zayas seems to have taken Stieglitz's accusations in stride, perhaps because he partly admitted their truth. Agnes Meyer was furious, however, and said as much to de Zayas in a strongly worded note:

After carefully considering Stieglitz's false version of the separation of 291 and the Modern Gallery, we both [she and Eugene] decided that the most dignified thing to do is to ignore it altogether....[Stieglitz] always claims that Camera Work is a record. It is more a record of himself with all his virtues and all his pitiful weakness than of anything else....The Modern Gallery can stand on its own two feet and needs not fear a Stieglitz....To have known S. is very beneficial, to let him hang on is sure destruction.<sup>4</sup>

Meyer and Stieglitz were not again on friendly terms until the 1940s.

Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to say what really happened, although a few general observations can be offered. One rather banal conclusion that can be drawn is that in Stieglitz's world, where de Zayas had moved for so long, business was indeed incompatible with art. The high ethical standards that Stieglitz had so thoroughly incorporated into his practice made negotiations concerning the value of a work of art virtually impossible, especially when it came to selling works to persons Stieglitz thought unsuitable. At "291" Stieglitz seems to have been able either to ignore the problems that his high standards created, or to settle them to his own satisfaction. However, when de Zayas attempted to find his own way through these same ethical dilemmas he was condemned and excluded.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, de Zayas seems soon to



have found that practical business methods were more than he himself could stomach, and gave up the aggressive marketing of modern art for a retreat to the high ground already occupied by Stieglitz. The “objective” seems, indeed, to have been too powerful a force in America to make an approach to it worthwhile. Unlike Stieglitz, however, de Zayas had, for a time at least, been willing to respond to the changes taking place in the art world, and to admit that the production of art had “commercial” aspects that could not completely be ignored. He seems to have realised that Stieglitz’s blindness to the importance of practical matters, and his refusal to admit that “291” was, in its own way, deeply involved in the promotion of art, were hypocritical and ultimately damaging to his cause.

Early in 1916, about the time of the blowup with de Zayas and Meyer, Stieglitz, together with a number of other New York artists and critics, was busy with preparations for something called the Forum Exhibition. A large show made up entirely of modern work by American artists, it was organised with the intention of countering the preponderance of European art then on display in New York, and to serve as an alternative space to the for-profit galleries.<sup>6</sup> While the work exhibited was for sale, the organisers claimed that all the art shown had been given a fair valuation and that it could be bought without risk. Stieglitz and his associates on the organising committee publicised these contentions widely, but were met with a fair amount of skepticism from individuals who maintained that the “commercial” galleries had, in fact, made a real contribution to modern art in the United States.<sup>7</sup> When the Forum Exhibition opened in March of 1916, it was not well attended and not much work was sold. Stieglitz, in fact, appears to have participated in the project mainly with the aim of countering the forces of commercialism in art. As such, his involvement must, I think, be understood as constituting something of a reply not only to the likes of Montross and Coady, but also to de Zayas’ activities at the Modern Gallery. Stieglitz seems to have tried to show that exhibitions such as this one were the way to fight



commercialism in New York, not by giving in to it. 291 magazine itself folded in March of 1916 after twelve issues had appeared. The backers, Stieglitz, Meyer, Haviland, and de Zayas, seem to have agreed early in that year that there was little more to be said, and that the considerable expense involved was no longer justified.<sup>8</sup> Stieglitz, however, appears to have been the first to withdraw. I would speculate that the close connection 291 magazine had formed with “commercialism” at the Modern Gallery probably influenced his decision to abandon the project.



## Notes

1. References to the spat in letters are very vague, although the bitterness of feeling is unmistakable. De Zayas and Stieglitz were reconciled by the end of 1916, but Stieglitz and Meyer were never again on friendly terms. Most commentators agree that the dispute had something to do with conduct of business at the Modern Gallery. See: Lowe, Stieglitz, 199-200; Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 124-25. In conversation with Dorothy Norman, Stieglitz also said that de Zayas had given him to believe that the Modern gallery would be devoted only to abstract art, and that most of Stieglitz's stable of artists, including John Marin, would therefore be shut out. Alfred Stieglitz, "Four Happenings," 126-27.
2. "'291' - A New Publication"; "'291' and the Modern Gallery"; "Exhibition Arrangements at '291'"; "From '291' - July-August Number, 1915"; Marsden Hartley, "Epitaph for Alfred Stieglitz," Camera Work 48 (October 1916), 62-70.
3. "'291' and the Modern Gallery," 64. See Lowe, Stieglitz, 205-06.
4. Agnes Meyer to Marius de Zayas, no date (probably late 1916), MDZP (photocopy).
5. Leavens notes that de Zayas, unlike Stieglitz, had to earn a living. Leavens, '291' to Zurich, 124.
6. On the Forum Exhibition: Anne Harrel, The Forum Exhibition: Selections and Additions (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1983); Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 80-91; Tolnick, "Collecting American Modernism," 53.
7. Some artists were even pressured to withdraw their work from "commercial" venues. See Willard Huntington Wright to John Weichsel, 31 January 1916, Weichsel Papers, Archives of American Art. Quoted in Zilczer, "Aesthetic Struggle," 85. The critic for the New York Mail wrote that

The point made by the committee that the exhibition is free from any commercial influence is hardly fair to the dealers who have had the courage to show these paintings before the Forum Exhibition Committee was born.

Without the decried 'commercial influence' of Montross and Daniels many of these men never would have had a chance to show their work in public in New York. "Little Novelty in Forum Exhibit," New York Mail 11 March 1916. Quoted in *Ibid*, 86.
8. On December 30, Stieglitz wrote to Haviland: "I do not feel as if I could afford the luxury of continuing it, and you told me before you left that you certainly could not. If Mrs. Meyer is willing to go on assuming the whole responsibility, and de Zayas feels like continuing the work why I have no objections, but personally I feel that there will be nothing to add." Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Haviland, 30 December 1915, ASA.



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## Figures





Fig. 50

Mrs. A Roosevelt  
Tennis Player - Serving  
c.1915  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 12, February 1916)





Fig. 49

Francis Picabia  
Portrait Max Jacob  
Ink on paper  
1915  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 10/11,  
December 1915/January 1916)



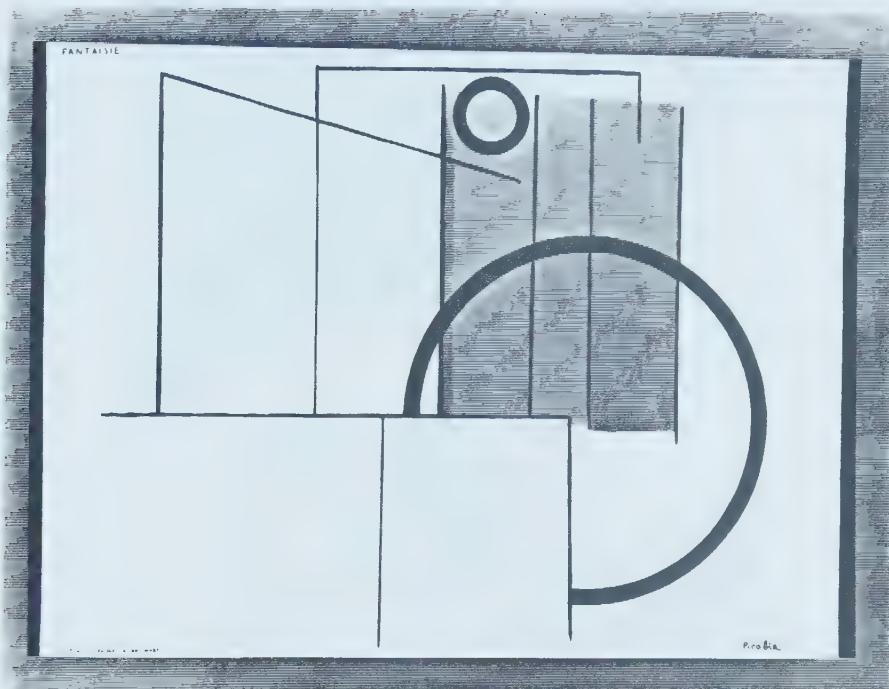


Fig. 48

Francis Picabia  
Fantaisie  
1915  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 10/11,  
December 1915/January 1916)



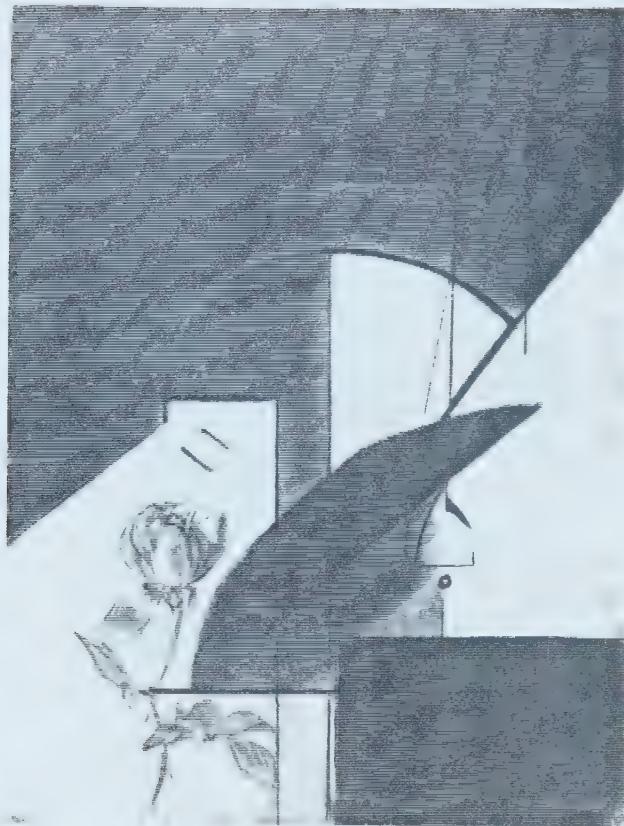
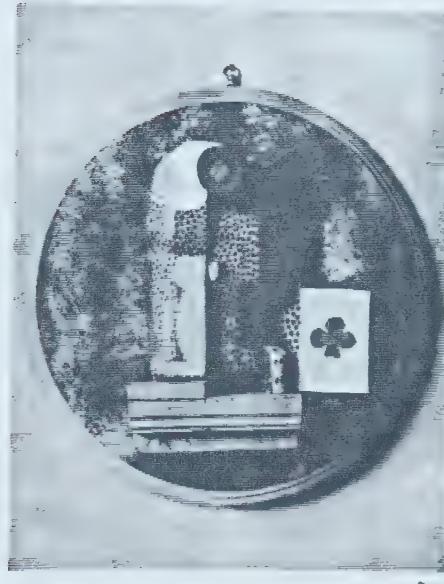


Fig. 47

Marius de Zayas  
Picasso  
c.1915  
Charcoal on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 10/11,  
December 1915/January 1916)



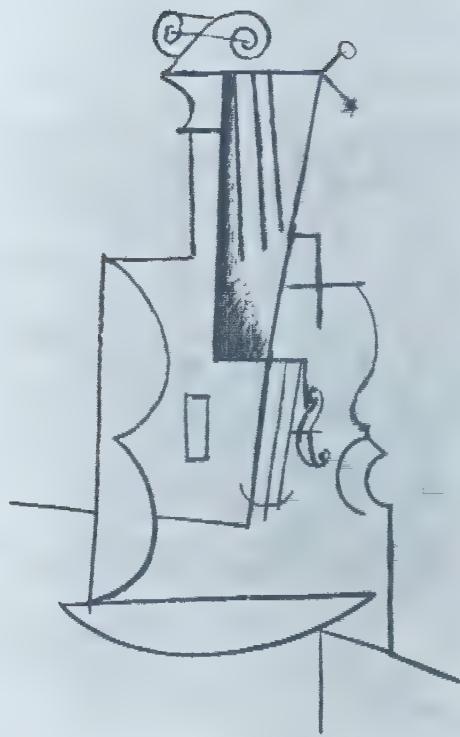


Nos. 10-11      December, 1915-January, 1916      20 cts.

Fig. 46

Pablo Picasso  
Glass, Pipe and Ace of Clubs  
Painted wood and tin  
1914  
34 cm diameter  
(Cover of 291 Nos. 10/11,  
December 1915/January 1916)





PICASSO

Fig. 45

Pablo Picasso  
Drawing  
c. 1912  
Charcoal on paper  
(Back cover of 291 No. 9, November 1915)



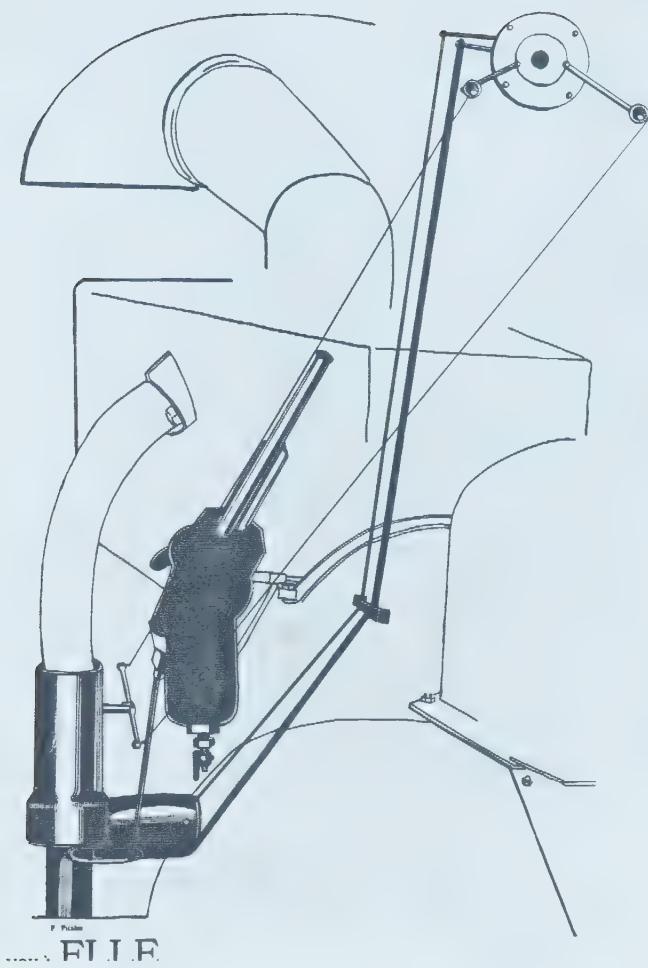


Fig. 44

Francis Picabia  
Voilà Elle  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 9, November 1915)



## FEMME!

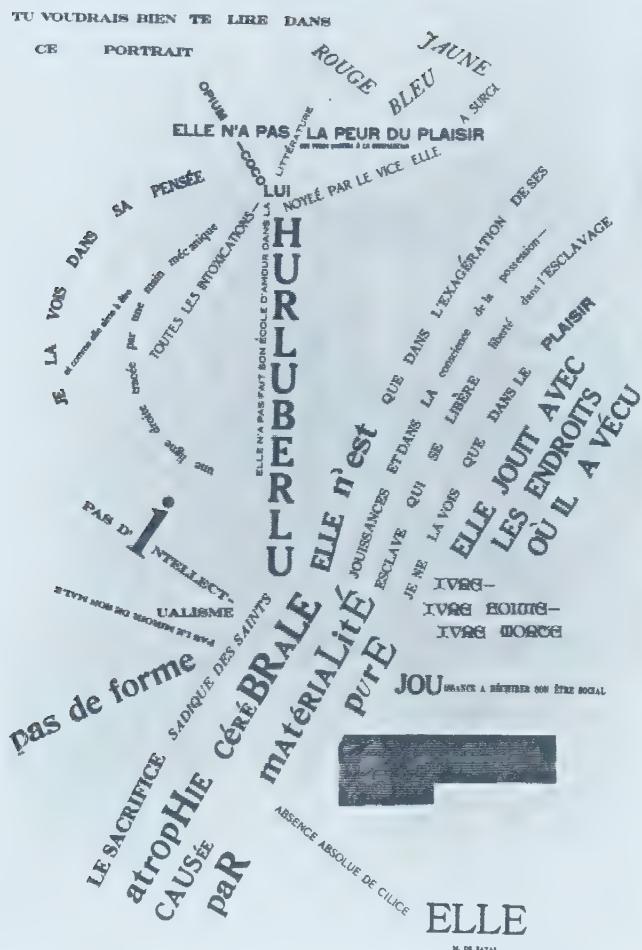


Fig. 43

Marius de Zayas  
Femme!  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 9, November 1915)



# 291

No. 9

November 1915

10 Cents

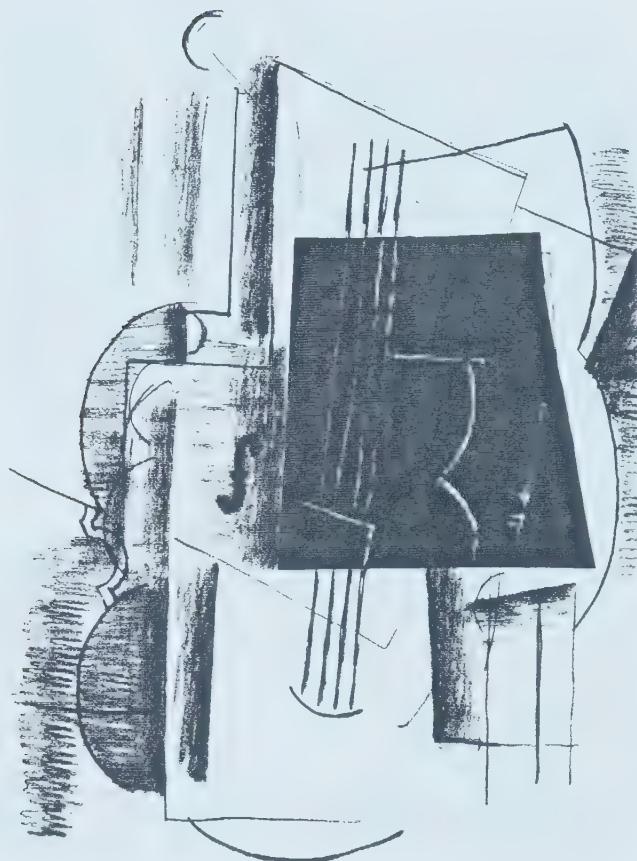


Fig. 42

Georges Braque  
Drawing  
c. 1912  
Charcoal on paper  
(Cover of 291 No. 9, November 1915)





Fig. 41

Alfred Stieglitz  
The Steerage  
Photogravure  
1907  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 7/8, September/October 1915)



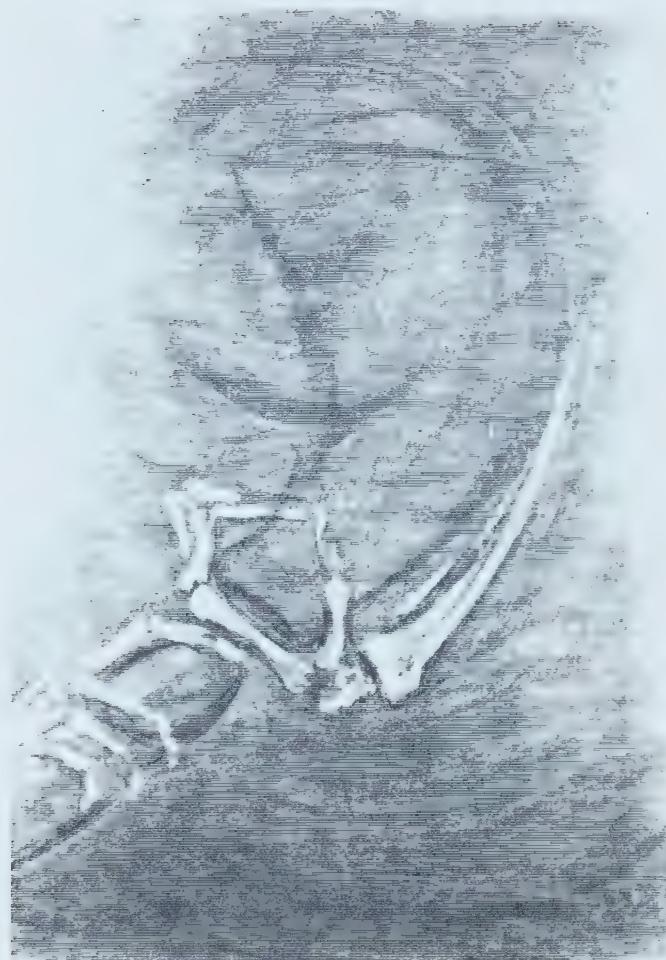


Fig. 40

Marius de Zayas  
The Strike of the Uterus  
c.1915  
Charcoal on paper  
81.3 x 44.1 cm



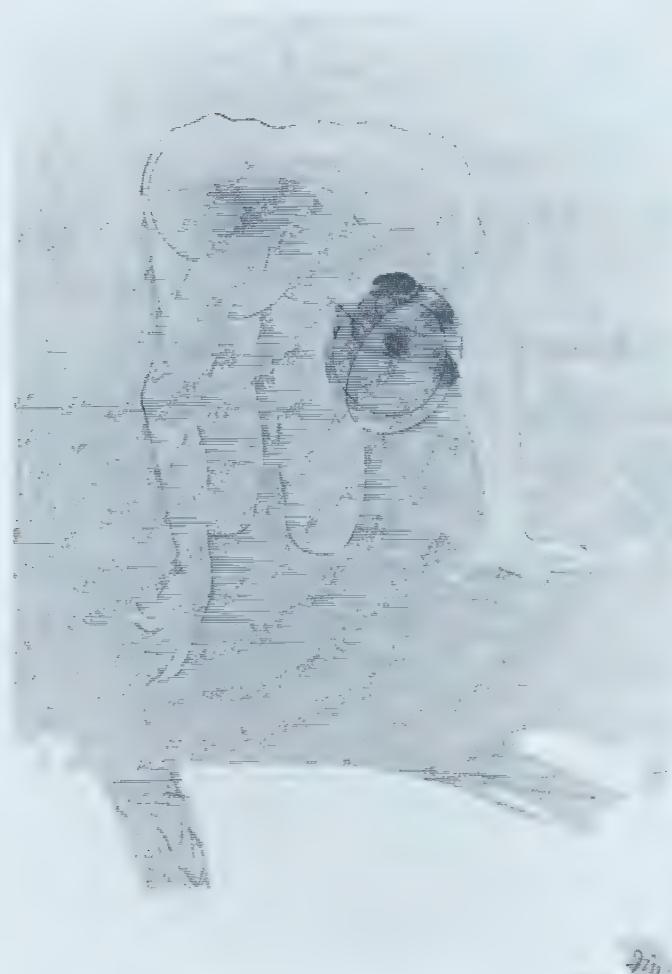


Fig. 39

August Rodin  
Drawing  
c. 1900-1909  
Pencil and watercolour on paper  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 34/35,  
April/July 1911)





Fig. 38

Advertisement for Wallace portable lamp  
Vanity Fair, February 1915



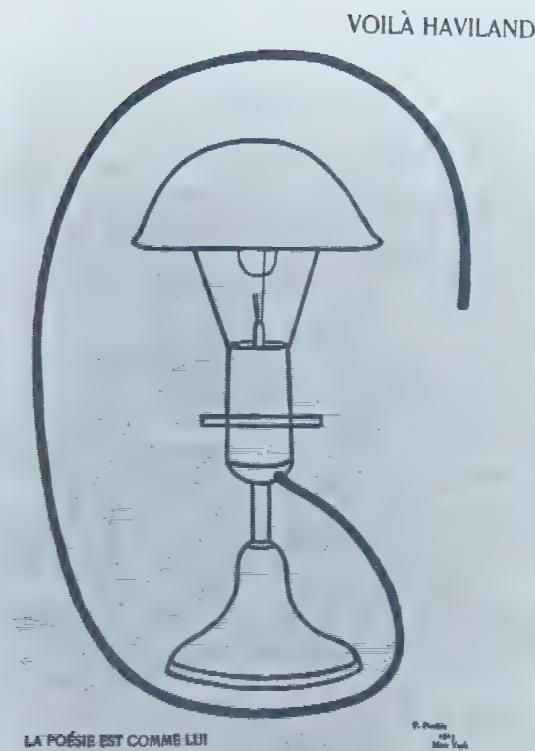


Fig. 37

Francis Picabia  
Voilà Haviland  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 5/6, July/August 1915)



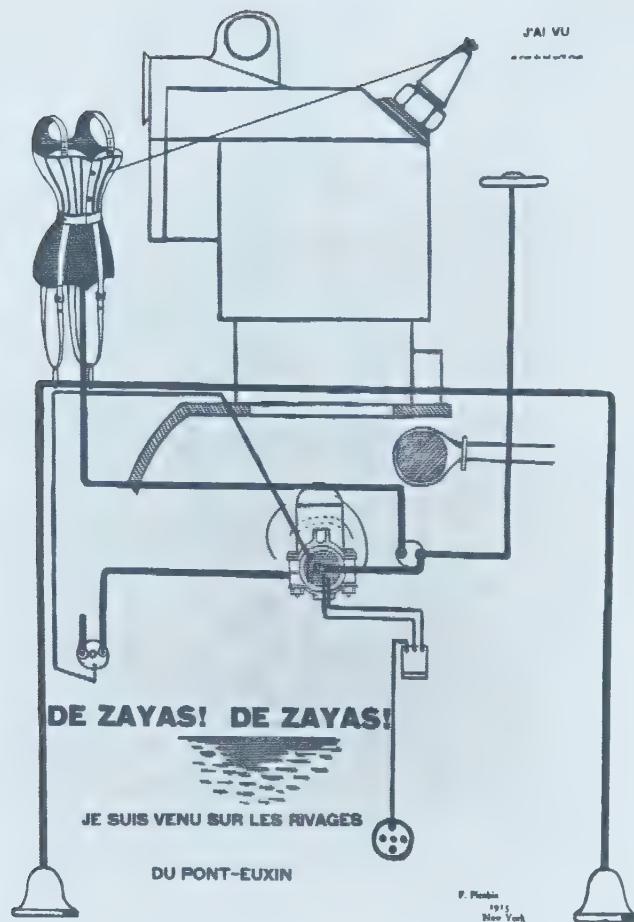


Fig. 36

Francis Picabia  
De Zayas! De Zayas!  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 5/6, July/August 1915)



D'UNE JEUNE FILLE AMÉRICAINNE  
DANS L'ÉTAT DE NUDITÉ



Fig. 35

Francis Picabia  
Portrait d'une jeune fille Américaine  
dans l'état de nudité

1915

Ink on paper

(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 5/6, July/August 1915)



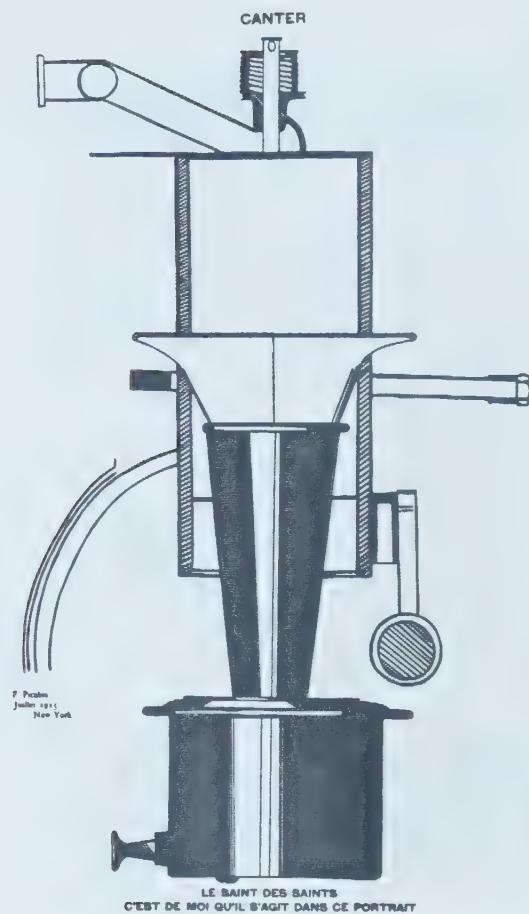


Fig. 34

Francis Picabia  
Canter  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 5/6, July/August 1915)





Fig. 33

Francis Picabia

Ici Stieglitz...

1915

Ink on paper

(Reproduced in 291 Nos. 5/6, July/August 1915)



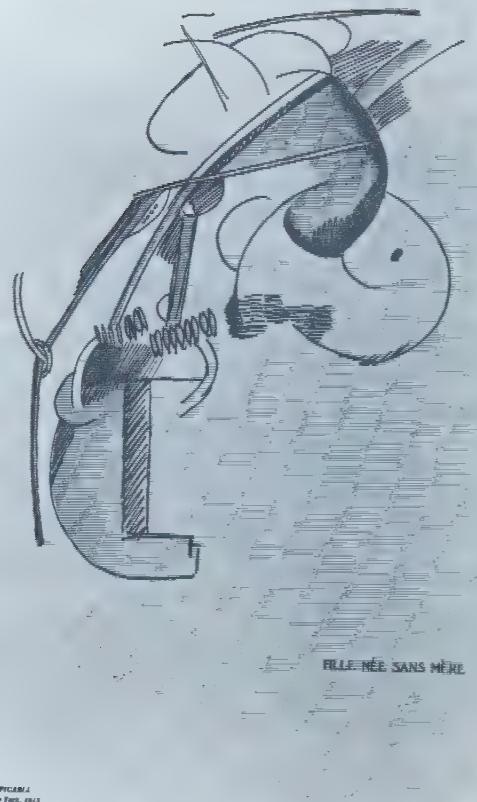


Fig. 32

Francis Picabia  
Fille née sans mère  
1915  
Ink on paper  
26.7 x 21.6 cm  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 4, June 1915)





Fig. 31

Abraham Walkowitz  
Drawing  
Ink on paper  
c. 1915  
Page from 291, unpublished issue, 1915



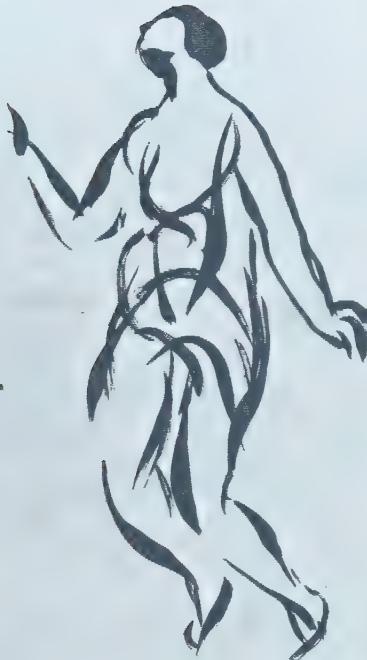


Fig. 30

Abraham Walkowitz  
Isadora Duncan  
Ink on paper  
c. 1915  
Proof of 291, unpublished issue, 1915



I insist on it have! as order  
On all orders Stieglitz



This is my drawing  
To indicate pose  
for A. Walkowitz  
to have to  
spare on

Fig. 29

Abraham Walkowitz  
Isadora Duncan  
Ink on paper  
c. 1915  
Proof of 291, unpublished issue, 1915





Fig. 28

Page 6 from Puck June 5, 1915



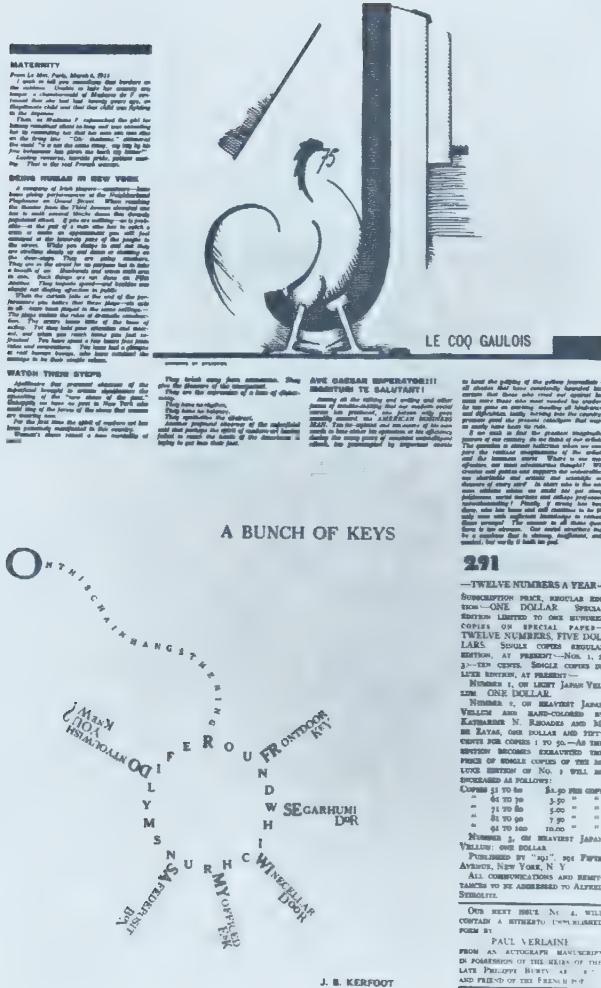


Fig. 27

Page 4 from 291 No. 3, May 1915.





Fig. 26

John Marin  
Cover of 291 No. 4, June 1915  
Ink on paper



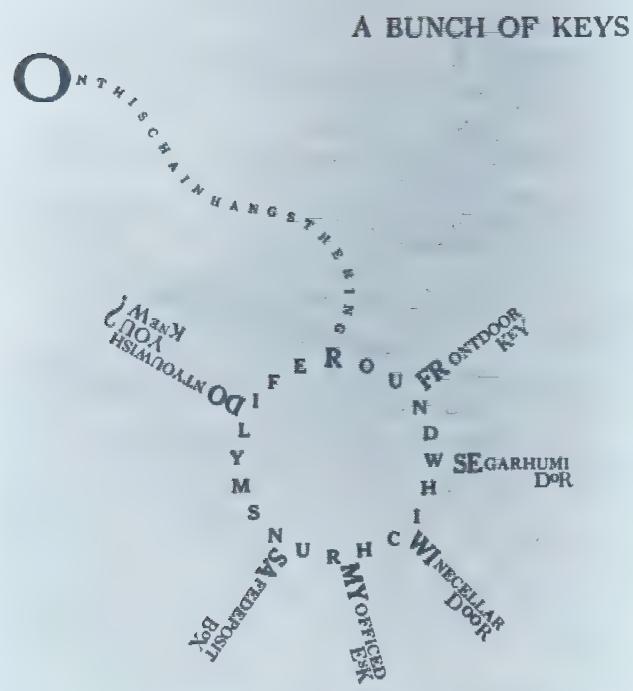


Fig. 25

J. B. Kerfoot  
A Bunch of Keys  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 3, May 1915)



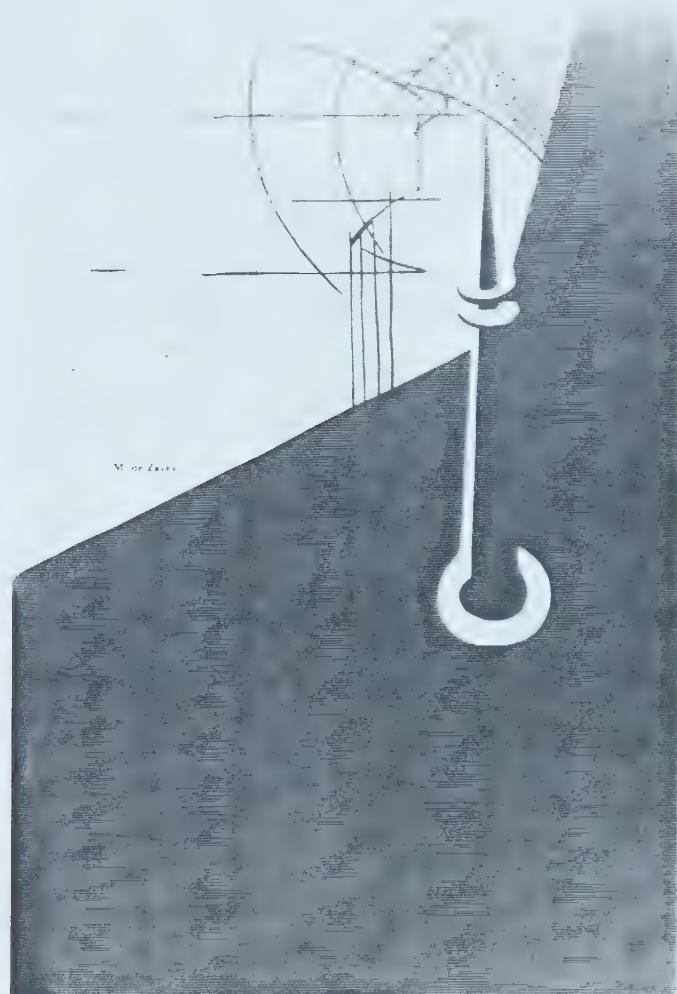


Fig. 24 b

Marius de Zayas, Katherine Rhoades, and Agnes Meyer  
Inside page of 291 No. 3, May 1915, cont  
Ink on paper



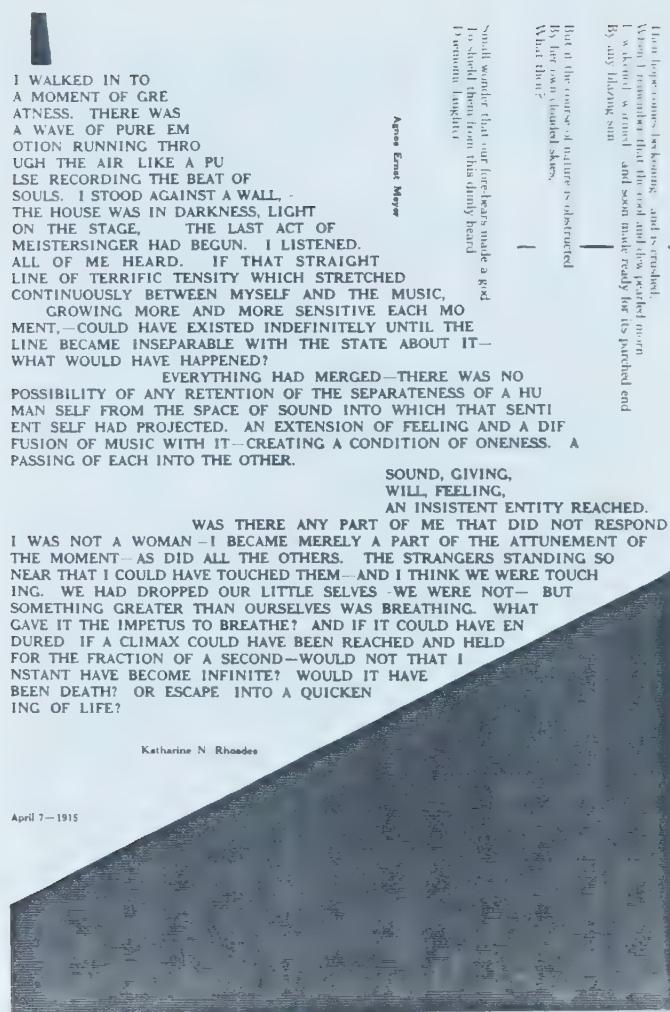


Fig. 24 a

Marius de Zayas, Katherine Rhoades, and Agnes Meyer  
 Inside page of 291 No. 3, May 1915  
 Ink on paper



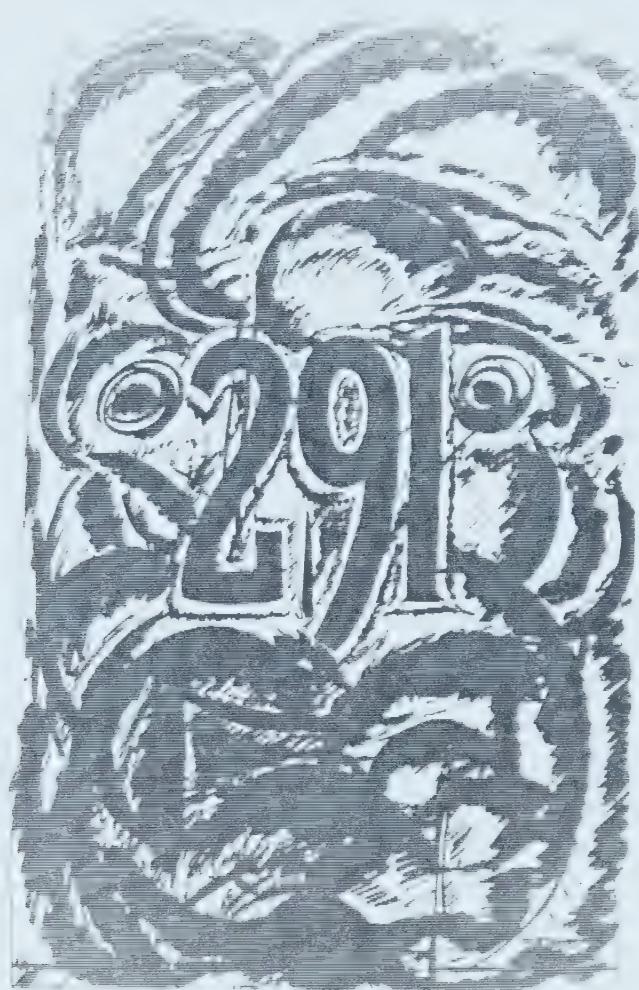


Fig. 23

Abraham Walkowitz  
Cover of 291 No. 3, May 1915  
Ink on paper



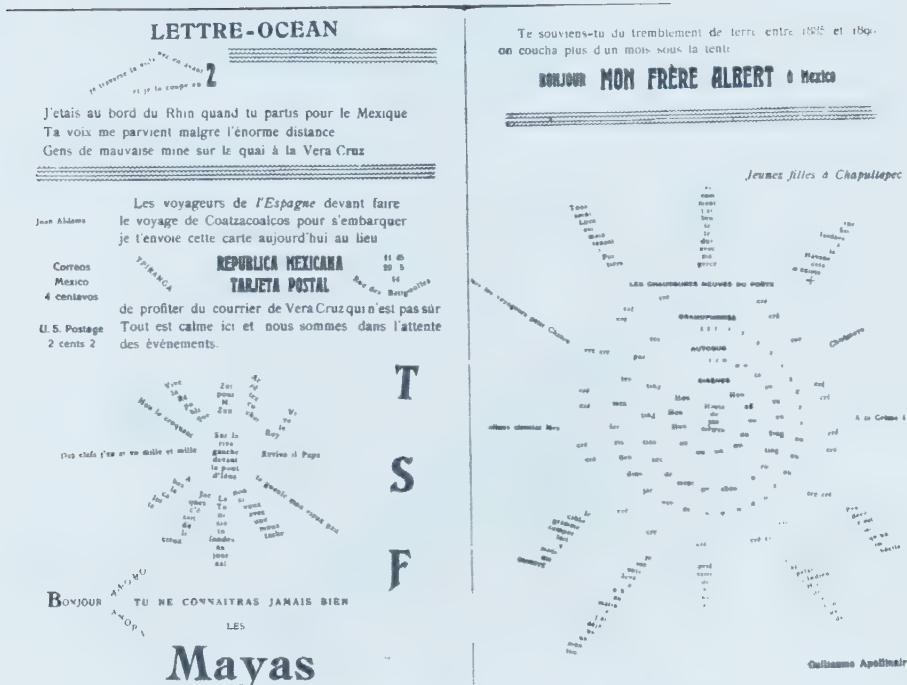


Fig. 22

Guillaume Apollinaire  
Lettre-Océan  
1914  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in Les Soirées de Paris, June 1915)



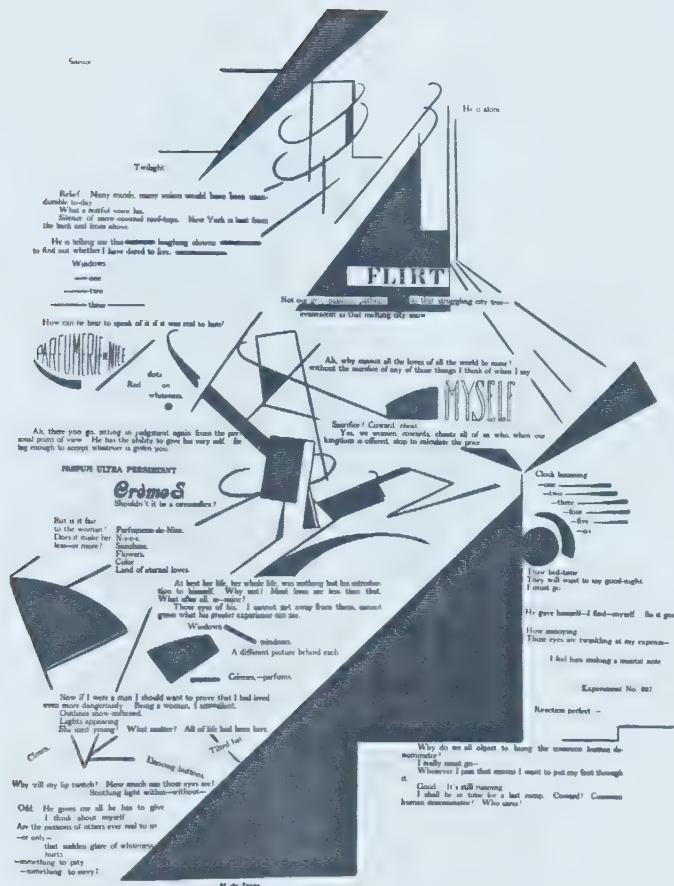


Fig. 21

Marius de Zayas and Agnes Meyer  
Mental Reactions  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 2, April 1915)



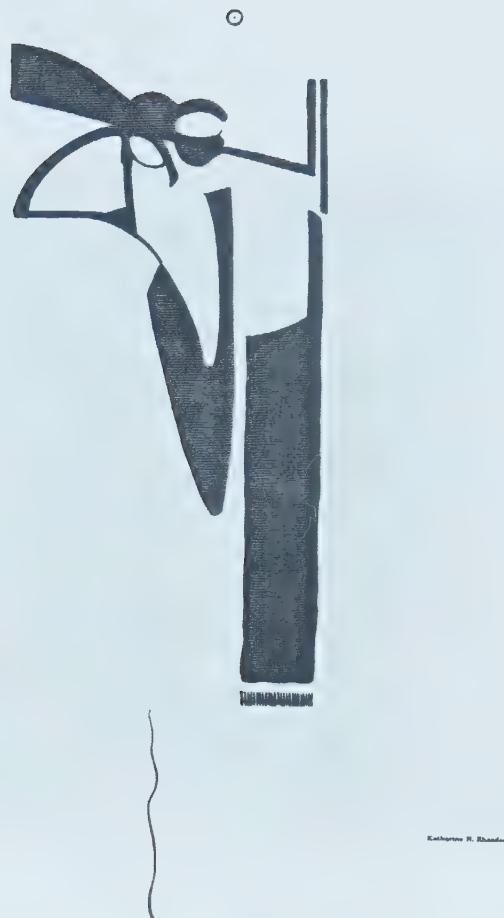


Fig. 20

Katherine Rhoades  
Untitled  
1915  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 2, April 1915)



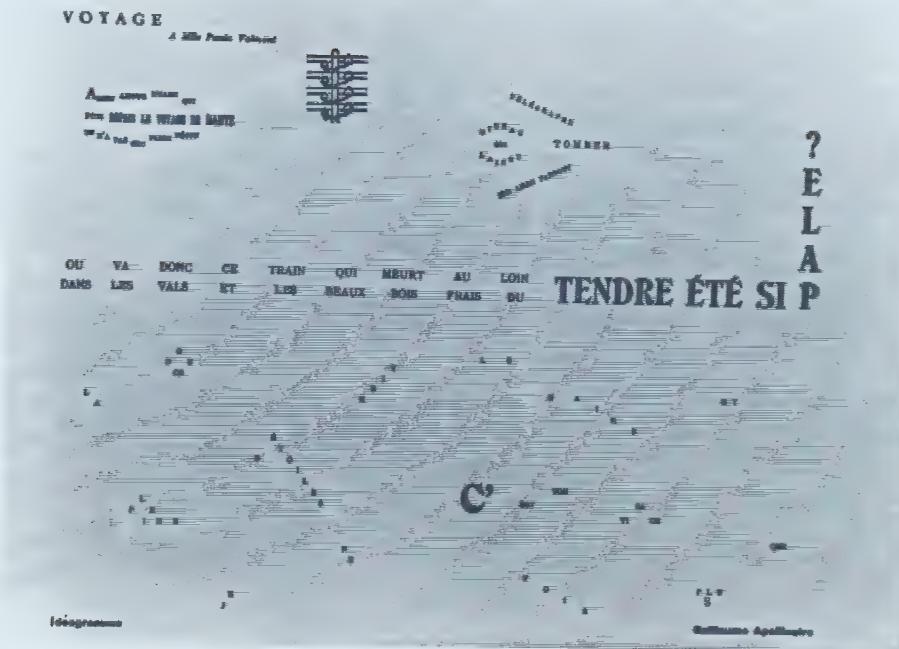


Fig. 19

Guillaume Apollinaire  
Voyage  
1914  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 1, March 1915)



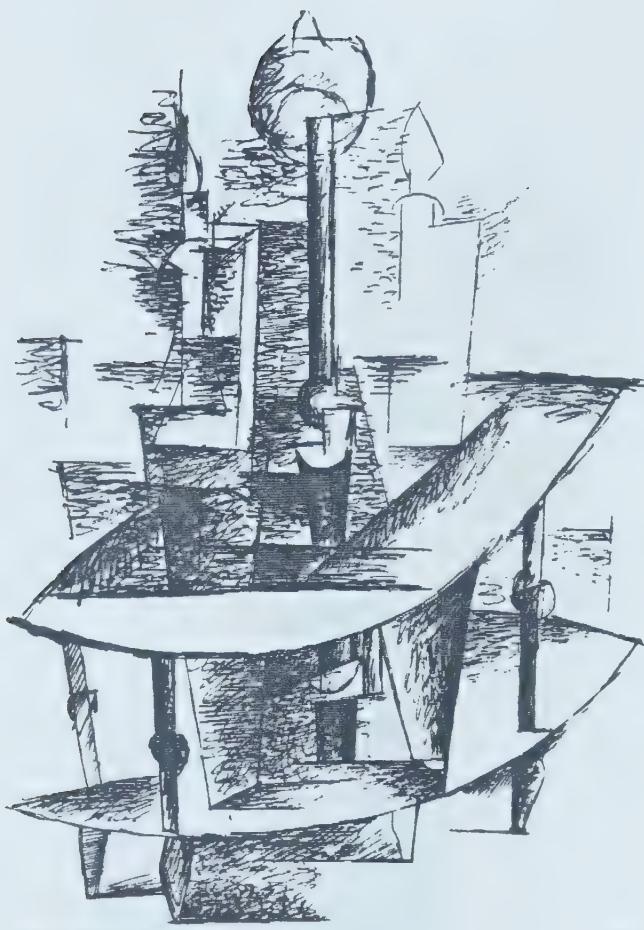


Fig. 18

Pablo Picasso  
Oil and Vinegar Castor  
c. 1912  
Etching  
(Reproduced in 291 No. 1, March 1915)



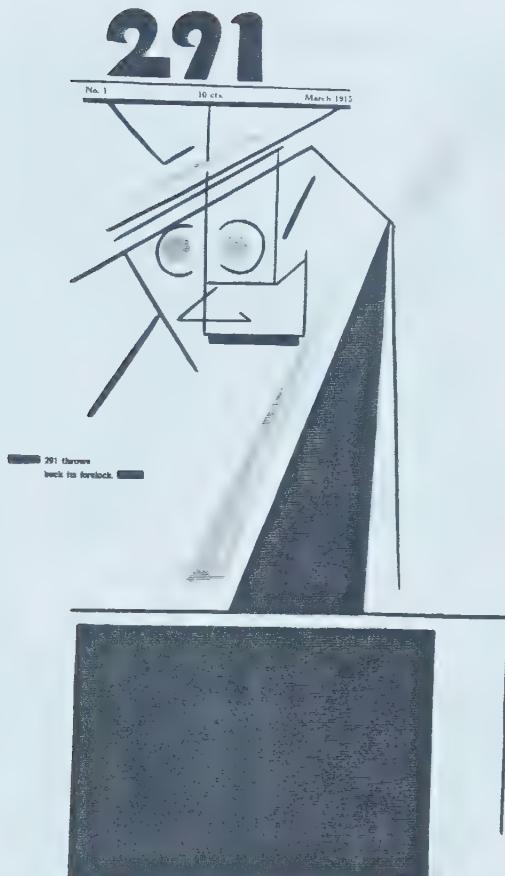


Fig. 17

Marius de Zayas  
“291” throws back its forelock  
1915  
Ink and wash on paper  
(Cover of 291 No. 1, March 1915)





Fig. 16

Francis Picabia  
Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie  
c.1914  
Oil on canvas  
250 x 198.6 cm





Fig. 15

Marius de Zayas  
Guillaume Apollinaire  
1914  
Ink on paper  
(Reproduced in Les Soirées de Paris, July 1914)



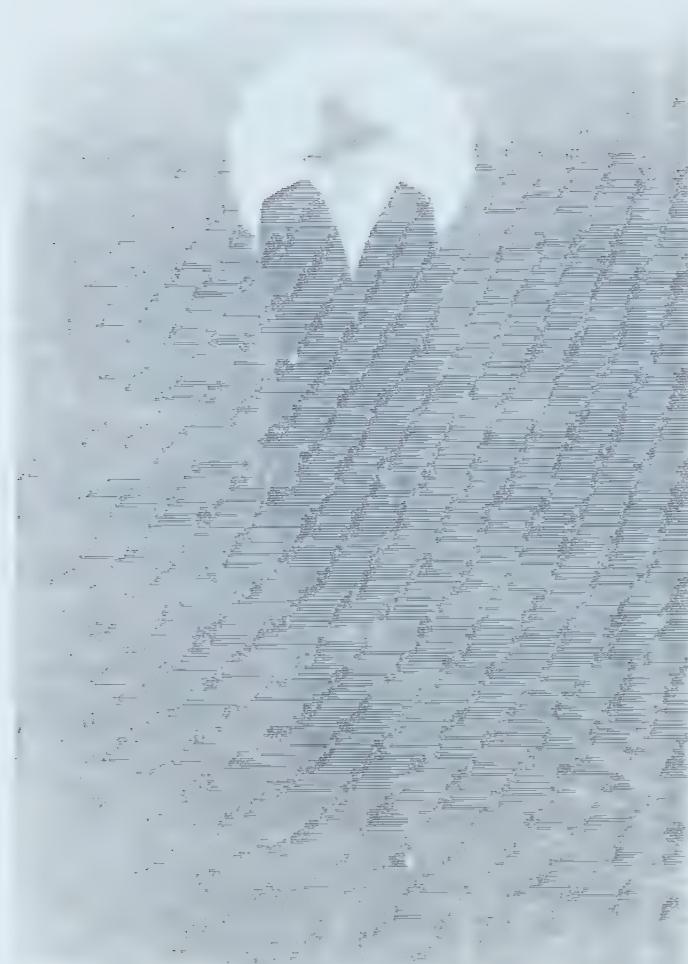


Fig. 14

Marius de Zayas  
L'Accoucheur d'idées (Stieglitz)  
c. 1909  
Charcoal on paper  
62.3 x 47.8 cm  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 38, January 1912)



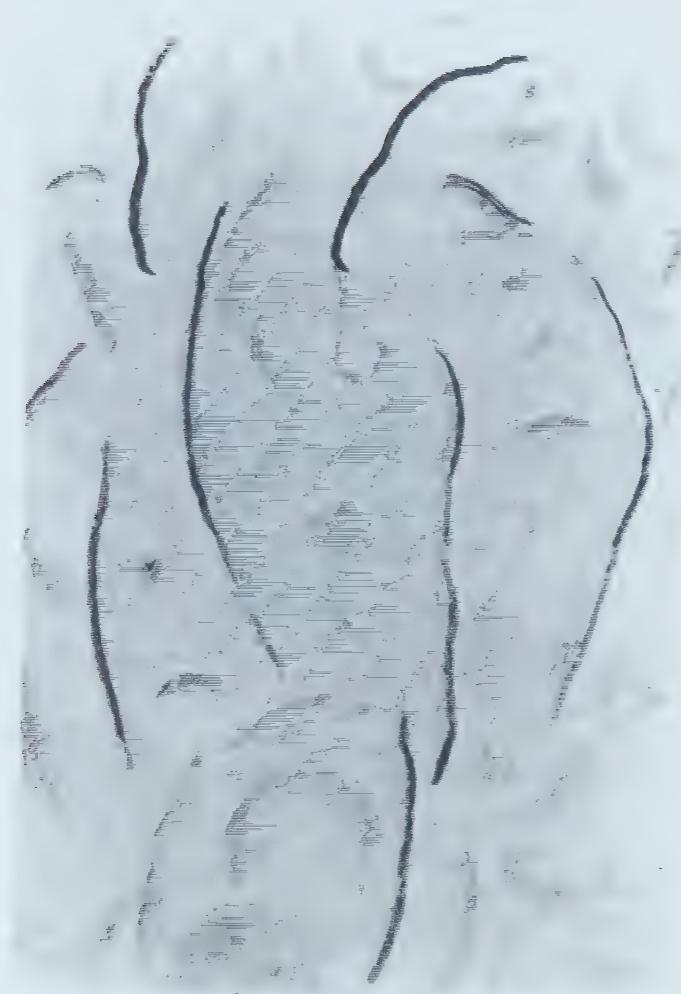


Fig. 13

Abraham Walkowitz  
From Life to Life I  
1912

Pencil on paper  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 44,  
October 1913, published March 1914)



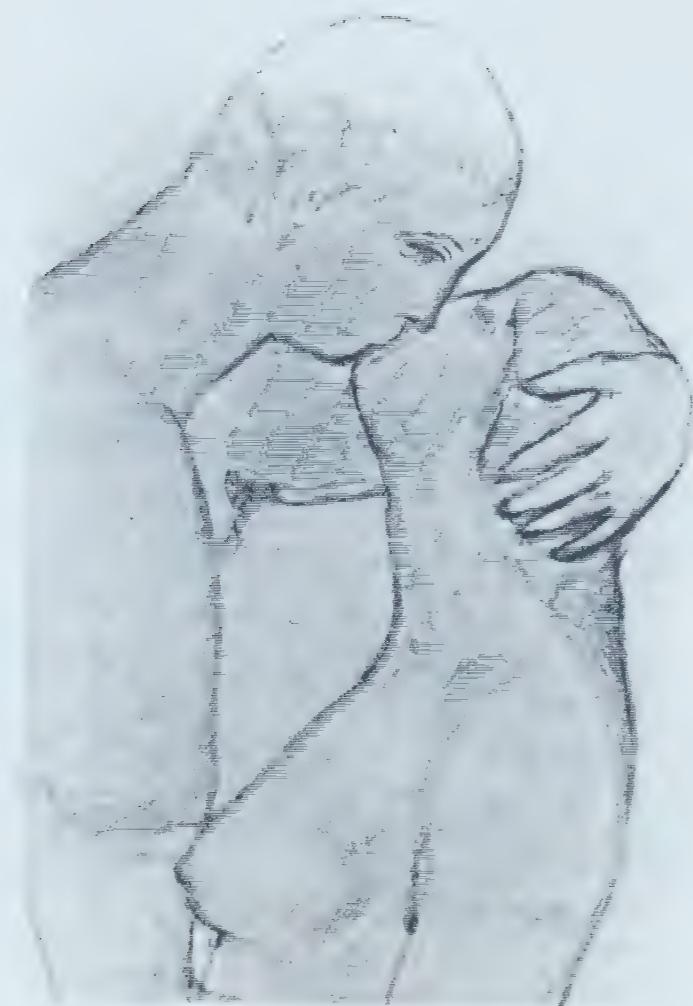


Fig. 12

Abraham Walkowitz

The Kiss

c. 1912

Pencil on paper

(Reproduced in Camera Work 44,

October 1913, published March 1914)



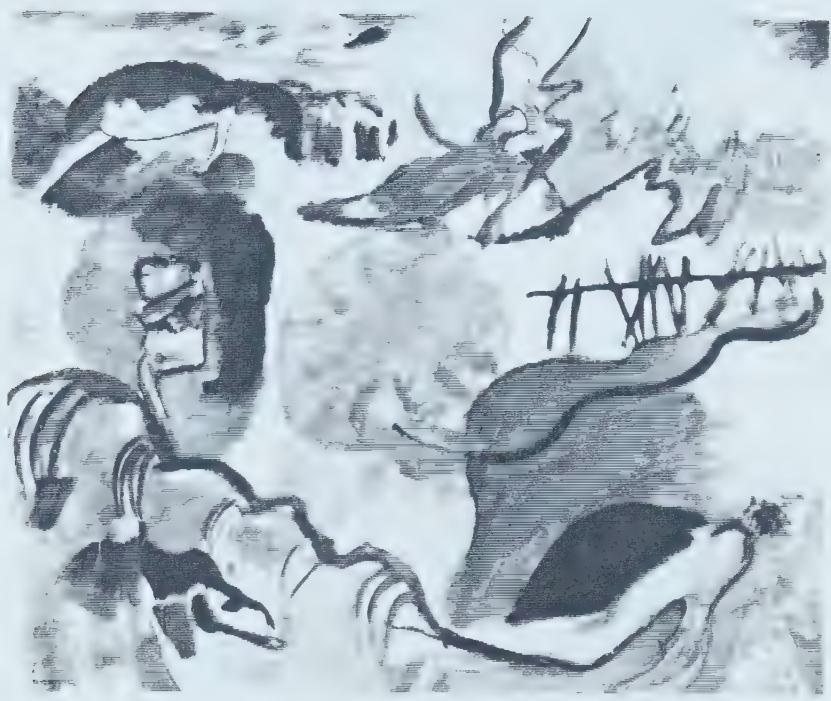


Fig. 11

Wassily Kandinsky  
Garden of Love (Improvisation #27)  
1912  
Oil on canvas  
120.3 x 140.3 cm





THE ACCIDENTAL CUBISTS

© 1914 M. de Zayas. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

Fig. 10

Marius de Zayas  
The Accidental Cubists  
1914  
(Reproduced in Puck, May 9, 1914, 20)





HENRI MATISSE  
*Post Impressionist*

Fig. 9

Marius de Zayas  
Henri Matisse  
1914  
(Reproduced in Puck, December 12, 1914, 9)



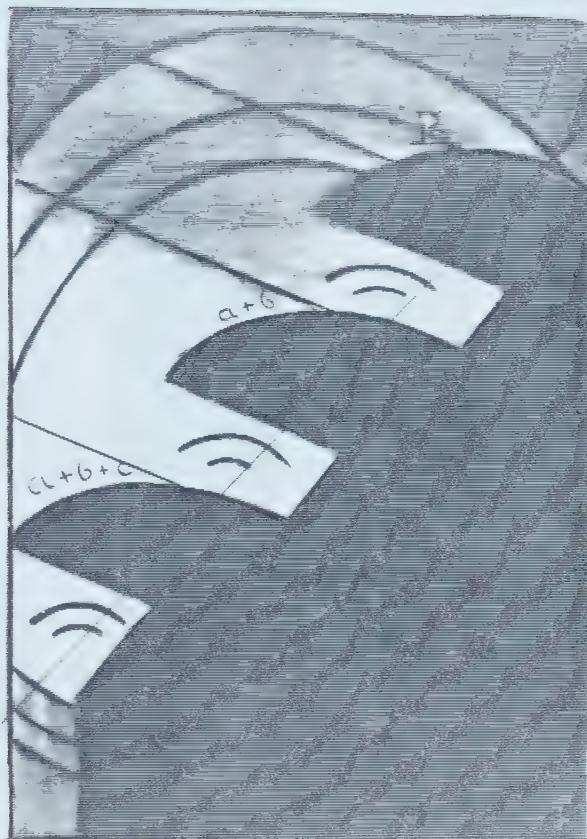


Fig. 8

Marius de Zayas

Francis Picabia

1913

Charcoal on paper

(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,  
April 1914, published October 1914)



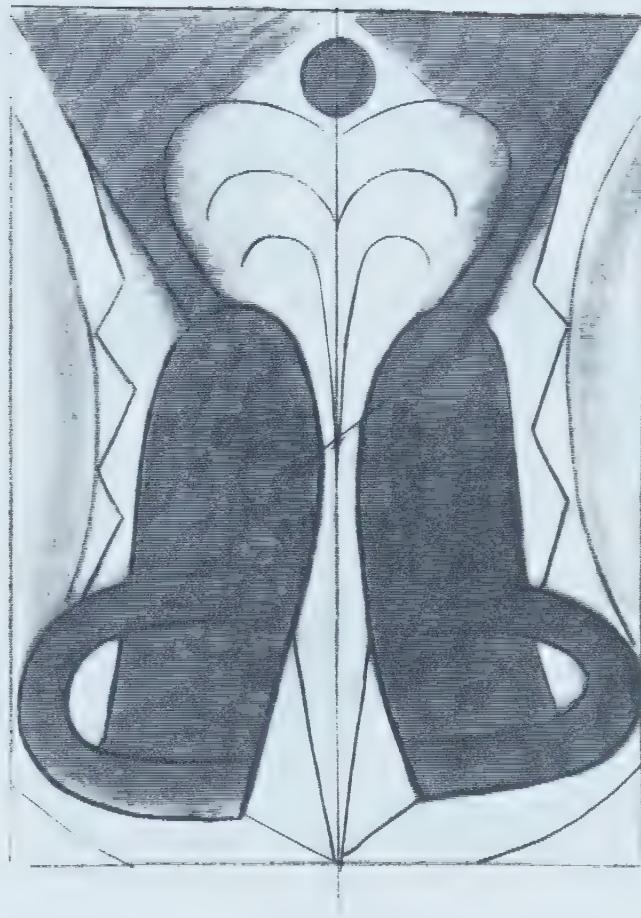


Fig. 7

Marius de Zayas

Paul B. Haviland

c.1913

Charcoal on paper

(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,

April 1914, published October 1914)



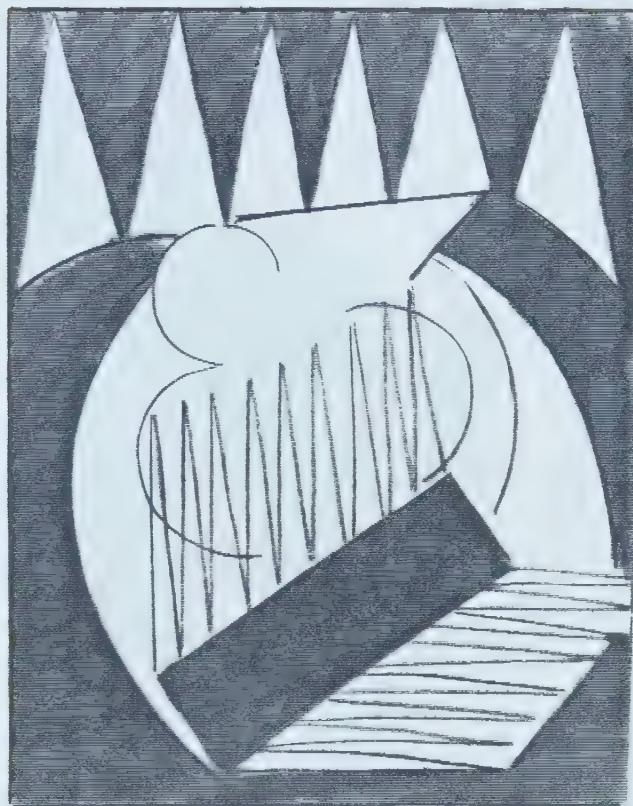


Fig. 6

Marius de Zayas  
Theodore Roosevelt  
c. 1913  
Charcoal on paper  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,  
April 1914, published October 1914)





Fig. 5

Marius de Zayas  
Two Friends  
1913  
Charcoal on paper  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,  
April 1914, published October 1914)



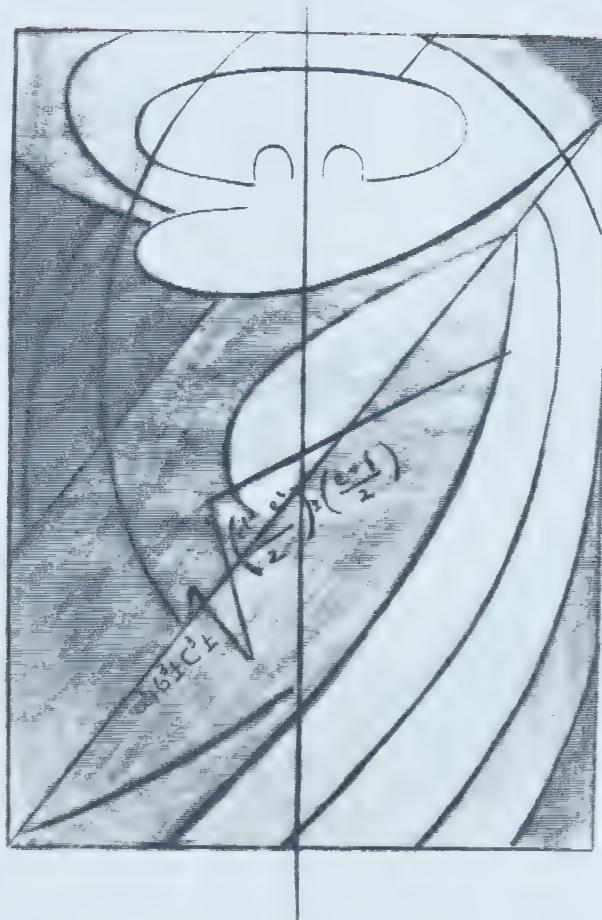


Fig. 4

Marius de Zayas  
Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Jr.  
c.1913  
Charcoal on paper  
(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,  
April 1914, published October 1914)



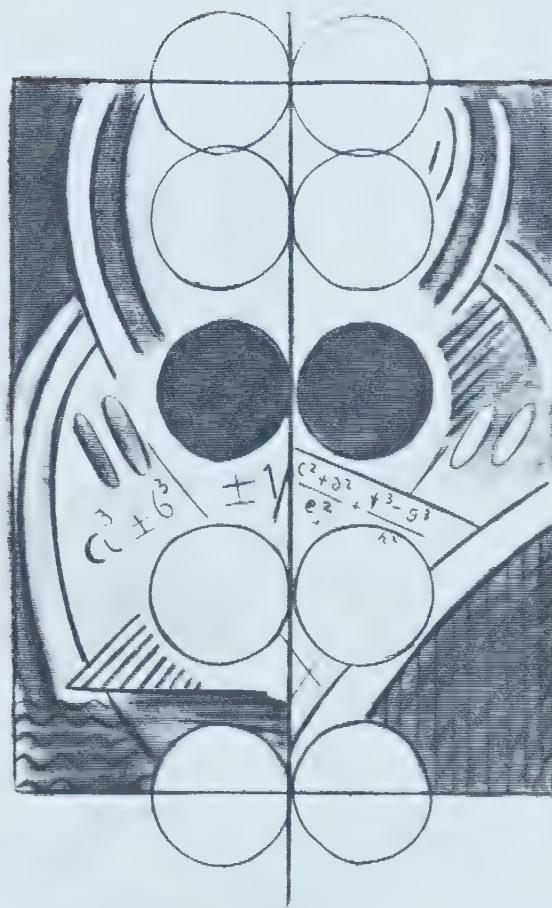


Fig. 3

Marius de Zayas

Alfred Stieglitz

c.1912

Charcoal on paper

(Reproduced in Camera Work 45,  
April 1914, published October 1914)





Fig. 2

Francis Picabia  
New York  
1913  
Watercolour and gouache on paper  
75 x 55 cm



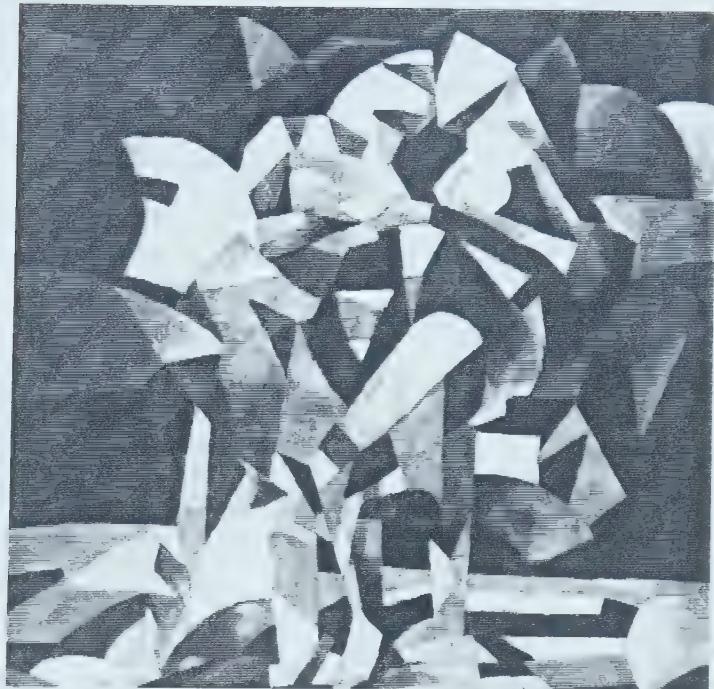


Fig. 1

Francis Picabia  
Danses à la source I (Dances at the Spring I)  
1912  
Oil on canvas  
120.6 x 120.6 cm













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